

When Time Runs Out

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When Time Runs Out

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Summary

Rodimus is off-limits. Megatron knows this and reminds himself of this every time he so much as thinks about him. One drunk kiss is not going to change this.

Chapter 1

Incredibly soft lips brushed against his. Megatron had no idea how it had happened, but it had happened. In one quick and glorious moment, he found, it was over. No time to react. No time to reciprocate or push him away. It was one of the quickest kisses of his life, but it left his spark racing. Not one moment later, the engex got the best of him, and he was left with an armful of unconscious Rodimus.

There weren't too many people left in the bar. That was good, he supposed. He had no excuse for the way he was feeling, but a sober Rodimus could blame this whole thing on his drunk self.

Had anyone seen? He'd expect no less than a small army of bots coming after him if they thought for even a second that he was taking advantage of him. If he had been the one to make the move, he would have. But he still wasn't sure how Rodimus had managed to move so fast, or how he had ended up in his lap. Especially with all that engex. How much had he had? He should have kept better watch.

"Rodimus?" Megatron gave him a little shake. He wasn't opposed to carrying him back to his room, but, again, angry mob. Passed out in his arms did not make for a good scene.

Rodimus' helm lolled back, his mouth wide. His chest still expanded with ventilations, so he was fine. Just exhausted. Why hadn't he stopped him before he got to this point? He had mostly come to make sure his co-captain was okay.

This was the third night in a row he had come to Swerve's. Now, Rodimus was known to drink a lot. But not to this point. Not this often. He usually just had enough to make bad decisions and have a viable excuse.

Tonight, he'd excuse the kiss.

"Uh, Megatron?" Swerve called over awkwardly. "I'm about to close up."

"Yes, yes, we were just leaving." Megatron tried shaking him again. Just a little more loudly, he repeated, "Rodimus!" Nothing. Well, it had to be done.

He shifted Rodimus off of his lap and got to his feet. Then he scooped the Prime up in his arms and made a quick dash for the exit, avoiding Swerve. Oh, this looked bad. Hopefully everyone was already back in their hab suites recharging. He just had to get Rodimus back to his, and then they could both forget what happened. It was better this way. He told himself that the whole way back, and his spark felt tighter with every reminder.

When he made it back to Rodimus' room, he realized the hitch in his plan. He had no idea what the pass code to his room was. He stood there for a while, with his arms full of a limp Rodimus, wondering what numbers might have meaning to him. Only knowing one sequence, he regrettably entered "89101." He was, fortunately, wrong. Unfortunately, that meant Rodimus wasn't getting into his room tonight. And there was only one room Megatron had access to.

No sense in dwelling on it. He couldn't just leave him out in the hallway or sprawled on a bench at Swerve's. Besides, after all that engex, he needed a comfortable place to sleep.

He was lucky to not pass anyone in the hall, and even luckier to find that no one was around his room. He could only imagine what would happen if someone saw him take an unconscious Rodimus *into his room*. No one would care what he'd have to say. And he couldn't fault them for

it. He shouldn't have let him get this far.

He would do this right. Lay Rodimus down on the berth, and *not* get in with him. He had a desk chair to sleep on. That would do. But once he had him lying down, looking more peaceful than he had ever seen him, well... It was tempting to curl his frame around him.

No. Even that would be taking advantage of him. One drunk kiss didn't mean anything. Knowing Rodimus, it had happened only because he was in the closest proximity. And he had been the one to let that happen. To let everyone else leave before them. To isolate Rodimus. He hadn't *meant* it that way but that was how it had happened. The two of them far closer than was proper to be, in a booth that could hold ten, he had let it happen. He had thought nothing of it when the last of their group had left to recharge. But he should have left then, too. Walked Rodimus home and keep this whole mess from happening. Then he wouldn't be here. Above Rodimus. Fighting with himself to let him sleep.

With a brisk shake to his helm to banish thoughts that he should have nipped in the bud long ago, he tucked his co-captain in. A small smile played at his lips as the covers were pulled up to his neck, and, oh, if that didn't make him more beautiful. No, no, he was going to leave him alone. It didn't matter whether or not he had consent because even if Rodimus wanted any of this Megatron couldn't give it to him.

It was days like this that he was painfully aware of his fate. All of these months aboard the Lost Light were just a tag on to his life. Extra time he had been granted. Impermanent. A temporary state of being. What could he possibly give to Rodimus when he knew that any moment it could all be snatched away? Even if Rodimus had feelings for him-- and how could he? How could he love someone who had slaughtered so many of his friends? Someone who had tried to kill *him*? Even if he *did*, it would be selfish to act on them. He had to hurt him now, to keep him from hurting later. That was all Megatron could do. Hurt him.

As much as it made his spark ache, he hoped this had all been the engex. That Rodimus would wake up, disgusted that he was even in Megatron's *berth*, and they could go back to normal. Where Megatron would yearn from afar, never acting on his feelings. For what could he give him beyond an unhappy ending?

And yet...

Megatron sighed. He tore his tired gaze off of the most beautiful mech he had ever laid optics on, and sat heavily in his desk chair. His helm met his hands in a familiar way. The same way they always met whenever Rodimus took monopoly over his processor.

What was he even doing at Swerve's? It wasn't like he could drink. No matter how much he wished he could lose this night to engex. No matter how many times he'd tried to wash away his feelings. He knew it wouldn't work. He'd down one, then two, and then he would lose count, but never did he feel the alibi of a swimming processor. His tank, on the other hand, reacted to it as it always had. He'd find himself purging or trying to sleep while it would gurgle and bubble.

Megatron tried to settle back into the chair. But no matter how he shifted his shoulders or how he turned his helm, he couldn't find enough comfort to recharge. The floor almost sounded like a nice option at this point. But it was his thoughts that were really keeping him awake. There was only one way to make them rest.

Pulling an empty data pad from a neatly stacked pile, he powered it up. It sat empty, waiting for words. But which words? There were so many... So many and yet none of them were right. After three false starts he sighed and leaned back. This hadn't used to be so hard.

Eventually something came. He didn't really think about it, just wrote from the spark. The kind of poem that would only be seen by his optics. The kind of poem that, once he was satisfied with, he deleted. He just had to get the words out. But even that didn't help. Not completely. This was going to be a long night.

In the end, Megatron resigned himself to getting no sleep. He sat back with his optics out of focus, and maybe they closed once or twice, but never for long enough. He was sure that he would be exhausted when morning came, but as soon as he heard Rodimus stir, he sat bolt upright, energy surging through his frame.

A groan eased out of Rodimus' vents as Megatron decided where he should be looking once his co-captain sat up. He realized too late how creepy it was to be watching Rodimus when blue optics met his. Confusion and, thankfully, a little horror, made them swell wide.

"Did we..."

Megatron didn't even let him finish. "No."

"Oh."

Well, wasn't that a weighted word. There was some relief, sure, but it was dwarfed by the overwhelming disappointment. Frag.

"I'm sorry. You passed out so I brought you here. I can take you back to your room, if you'd like." Megatron kept his gaze on the floor.

"If it's all the same to you, I'd, ugh..." Rodimus held his helm, optics squeezing up tight with pain. "Frag, how much did I have?"

"Enough." Megatron couldn't help but chuckle a bit. He stood and crossed the room to his berth before he could question whether this was a good idea or not. "I can help with the pain, if you'd like."

"Please." Glazed optics opened just a slit.

Megatron sat down on the berth and reached towards Rodimus. He stopped just short of his neck. He was letting himself get pulled in again. But he didn't want to watch Rodimus suffer, not when he could help him. He was just helping him. No one could fault him for that.

"I have to, uh, touch you, for this to work. Is that alright?" It was nothing too intimate, but he still had to know.

"If you can make this go away, you can do whatever you want to me."

Could Rodimus have said anything worse? And could his frame *not* react this way? It was embarrassing how quickly heat had rushed to his interface array, and it brought a flush to his face that he hoped his co-captain couldn't see. That wasn't what he had meant and even if he *had* meant it that way there was no way it could happen. A kiss was bad enough. *Thinking* about this was bad enough. Sitting here, his hand microns from his neck, was bad enough for three lifetimes. And all he had was one. One that he was still managing to hold on to with borrowed time.

Still. There was a helmache to deal with. No turning back now.

With careful fingers, Megatron massaged the wires at the nape of Rodimus' neck. He felt them warm up, felt the energon flow more easily, and was awarded with a relieved sigh. Then he was

simultaneously rewarded and punished when Rodimus leaned his back against his chest.

"You never told me you had magic fingers," Rodimus groaned out.

This new position made it hard for his "magic fingers" to get at his neck. He kept going until his wrist ached, and then continued for a while after that. It was only once his hand started cramping up and refused to move how he needed it to, that he stopped and pulled away from Rodimus. Immediately his frame missed the warmth, but he couldn't stay in this fantasy world where they were together and happy. Reality was far too pressing.

"No, please," Rodimus begged, weakly reaching for him as Megatron stood. "It still hurts."

"It still hurts because your fuel levels are so low," Megatron explained. He crossed the room to fetch some energon from his cabinet and handed the cube to Rodimus and *didn't* sit back down because he knew he might not be able to stop himself if Rodimus tried anything. "Drink, and you'll feel better."

"But you make me feel better *now*," Rodimus whined.

That was the problem, wasn't it? Megatron wouldn't always be there to take the pain away. The pain that he would leave in his spark.

"I've opened your energon lines. Until you fuel up, that will only do so much." He had meant to nudge only the cube, but accidentally brushed one of Rodimus fingers in the process. "Drink."

Rodimus obeyed, taking a cautious sip. Then he seemed to realize just how thirsty he was, and downed it in a few quick gulps. Holding the empty cube out, he demanded, "More." To his credit, he did add a "please" before Megatron handed him his second cube.

"Take small sips," Megatron said before he relinquished the cube. "Two is plenty."

Why did his spark have to swell every time their fingers so much as touched?

"Can you still..." Rodimus' hand went to his neck. "Can you do that thing again? It felt really nice..."

He shouldn't. He *wouldn't*. His processor screamed at him while his frame moved as though they were two completely different entities. But the processor that knew that this was a bad idea, that continuing to stay around the Prime in general would only lead to his undoing, was very much a part of the same bot whose hands still reached for him. His mind could not plead innocent while his frame was held guilty. He was in control. Though he had never felt more out of control in his life.

This time, though, he arranged them so that Rodimus could not fall back on him. He wanted to be in control of what parts of them touched. So that this contact point was their *only* contact point. But Rodimus would always find a way to break the rules.

Megatron flinched when the hand he had left on the berth felt the touch of another. A smaller, more delicate hand. It didn't do much. It just sat there, touching its mate.

No, no, *not* its mate. Which gave it no reason to be there. Megatron should move his. He willed it to move. He could join it with the one on Rodimus' neck. That was plausible enough. True, it would only get in the way of the one that was hard at work, but it would be worth it to not give Rodimus the wrong, or perhaps very right, idea.

Should. He should move it. It was the first of many shoulds that he was sure to ignore. He could ignore the wants, though. Like the want to turn his hand over and interlace their fingers. The want

to pull Rodimus against his chest, to kiss at his audial flares. To have Rodimus kiss him again, this time sober, and this time, he would reciprocate. The want to do more. To see where the kiss would lead. To surrender to his more base instincts and rid himself of the pressure--

No! Whatever happened, he couldn't do that. He just... no.

He left Rodimus' hand where it lay. He pretended to not notice it as he continued to work away at the kinks in his hoses. It became harder to do so when Rodimus' pinky started to make small circles on the back of his hand. The touch made his spark swell and he hadn't noticed that he had stopped moving his hand. Had stopped ventilating, even, until Rodimus turned his helm.

"Megs? You okay?" The pinky had stopped. Rodimus' neck had curved under his hand and his optics had found Megatron's face.

"Megatron," he said sternly. "My name is Megatron."

"Sorry. Megatron." Rodimus shifted so he was facing his co-captain. "I feel a lot better now, thanks to you. Sorry I caused you so much trouble."

He grunted in response.

"Megs, uh, Megatron..."

He waited for Rodimus to go on, but when he didn't, he turned to look at him, and found Rodimus much closer than he had anticipated. Too close. There wasn't enough space between them. And then there was no space between them. Those soft lips fell upon his again. Young and full of life up against old and scarred. Without a drop of engex in either of their tanks.

Chapter 2

"I have to go."

Rodimus didn't even have time to open his optics before Megatron was out the door. He kept them closed until he heard the door shut. Though finding the room empty afterwards was no less painful than it would have been to watch him leave.

Had he... misread this? Megatron carrying him home, helping him with his helmache, letting him hold his hand... Well, not quite hold. But still. He hadn't *fragged* him, but that didn't mean total disinterest. As much as he would have liked him to. Then he'd know that he at least wanted him for that. Even if he wouldn't be able to remember the first time. He had always told himself it would just lead to more times. Sober times.

If only he knew what had happened last night. He remembered seeing Megatron come in the bar, but beyond that? It was all a haze of engex. Rodimus hoped his drunk self had at least confessed. That was the whole point.

Clutching his helm as a fresh pang of pain took over, he groaned. Why had he kissed him? If he hadn't driven him away he wouldn't be in pain. Their hands would still be touching. He'd still be close enough to smell him. But if he didn't want him, then why did he let him leave his hand where it had been? If he was going to reject him he just wanted him to get it over with.

With a sigh Rodimus curled up on the berth. He shut his optics, which helped the tiniest bit, but it was nowhere near as helpful as Megatron had been. Certainly not enough to give him peace enough to sleep.

Sleep was good. Forgetting what had happened for at least a few hours always helped. Until it eluded him. Then time ticked by so slowly he doubted any time had passed at all. He was perpetually stuck in this moment, helm and spark aching.

For once he wished he had work. As much as it would have sucked to deal with everything on top of a helmache, at least it would be something to do.

Maybe Megatron just needed to leave for his shift. Yeah. Him and Mags were all about punctuality and slag like that. Maybe it wasn't him. Maybe he still had a chance.

Rodimus sat up again, wincing at the lights. They weren't even that bright; how was he going to handle the rest of the ship? How was he even supposed to get out of berth when everything was sore? Primus, why did he always have to drink so much?

Rodimus jumped and hissed when his comm pinged. Whoever it was it had better be important.

::*Do you need anything?*:: Megatron's voice seemed to be the only sound that didn't exacerbate the pain. And he didn't sound angry. He didn't sound like anything. His tone gave nothing away.

Could his spark stop racing for one second? It acted like Megatron had confessed his love or something. Which he *hadn't*. And he wouldn't... Why would someone like him ever love Rodimus? Or even *like* him? This was such a stupid idea. He just needed to forget all of this. Something that he couldn't do while wrapped up in a blanket that still lingered with Megatron's essence.

::*No, I-- no. I'm good. Thanks. And... sorry. Again.*::

Even though it smelled too good and he knew it would only make matters worse, Rodimus wrapped himself up in Megatron's blanket. And if that wasn't bad enough, he took a big whiff. Optics closed and everything. He half-groaned and half-sighed. This was stupid. He was being stupid.

::Let me know if you need anything,:: Megatron's voice was in his audial again. *::And stay as long as you'd like.::*

Staying was not happening. Rodimus needed to leave and he needed to leave *now*. He needed to get out of the blanket and off of the berth. Thrashing until he was free, he threw the blanket down and angrily stood up. This, he could handle. This, he was used to. Anger was easy. Anger was always there for him. Anger was just about to storm him out of Megatron's room, and hopefully shoo him out of his spark, when a datapad caught his optic. One sitting alone on the desk beside a neat stack. One that had clearly been used recently.

So, he was still at that poetry stuff. Well, if anything was going to make him seem undesirable, it was his poems. He'd just have a quick peek. Just enough to tarnish the Megatron his mind had made.

He didn't really understand it. Actually, no, he didn't understand it *at all*. But he'd never understood poetry. It just sounded like a bunch of fluffy words. This one was no different, but at least he could tell that it was pretty. It was something about the sun. Something that Rodimus missed about Earth and Cybertron. Stars were pretty enough but there was just something about watching a sunrise.

The next time they stopped somewhere, he'd take Megatron to see a sunrise. It seemed like the old mech missed them, too.

No, no he wouldn't. He wouldn't take him to see a goddamn sunrise because Megatron wouldn't *want* to go with him. He didn't like him. He'd tried kissing him and he hadn't wanted it. All that Rodimus needed to do now was leave and forget.

Every movement made his frame ache. Just opening the door had Rodimus gritting his denta against the pain of moving his arm. Then the much brighter lights of the hallway hit his optics and it felt like a bomb had gone off in his processor. Tired optics shut in protest, and he brought a hand up to his neck to try and emulate Megatron's movements. Whatever he had done, Rodimus just couldn't figure it out. He needed thick, magic fingers...

That bomb hadn't done a very good job. With all the shrapnel cutting away at his processor it had done nothing to his memories. He still remembered the feel of Megatron's hand with painful clarity. His own hand made a mockery of what he had done. If anything, his helm hurt worse now.

Blinking and forcing his optics to adjust, he squinted and started off down the hall. He thought about going back to his own room and trying to sleep this off without Megatron's scent on him, but his room was so far away. Now the bar, that was much closer. If he just drank enough he wouldn't be in anymore pain, and he wouldn't need Megatron anymore.

His tanks roiled at the idea of more engex. He couldn't remember the last time he had gotten a proper fueling. Or a proper night's recharge, for that matter. But there wasn't anything he could do. As long as Megatron kept being... Megatron. These feelings would pass eventually. They always did. It was just a matter of time before he outright rejected him. Everyone left eventually. And once that happened he could move on. Until then he'd survive. He'd survived a four million year long war, he could survive a few errant feelings.

If only the engex would taste as good as Megatron's lips.

See? One of those feelings. A feeling that engex could make him forget! He was able to walk a little faster, despite the aches, with the thought of forgetting everything.

"*Rodimus*." The voice was booming and angry, but still not quite a shout. The kind of voice that could force a full room into silence with a few choice words. For Rodimus, all he need do was say his name.

"Uuuuuuugh." Rodimus grabbed his helm and turned slowly, letting his other arm hang limply. Making the most unenthusiastic face he could without making his helmache worse, he turned to face Ultra Magnus. The bot with the worst timing. "Not now, Magnus, okay?"

"You're late for your shift."

"What? I'm not supposed to work today!" He brought up the schedule on his HUD while preparing the smirk he would don once he proved Magnus wrong. It was much clearer today than it had been when he checked it about three drinks in last night. Which probably explained why he hadn't noticed the tiny tile for today that had his and Megatron's name in it. Great.

"Yes, you are," Ultra Magnus said. And you're late."

Groaning, Rodimus said, "Yeah, okay, I see that. I misread the schedule."

"It's been up for weeks. You need to get more organized, Rodimus. Now, get to the bridge."

Rodimus whined, "Can't Megatron handle it?"

"I know Megatron *can*, as he has proven time and again, but you two need to learn to work together. I had started to appreciate your work ethic as of late but every time you two are together on the bridge you get next to nothing done. I thought you had put your jealousy behind you but apparently you still need to work on it. Which means you don't get to skip out on this shift-- nor should I have let you take so many off-- just because you decided to drink too much. Now *move*." A giant hand shoved Rodimus in the direction of the bridge.

"I'm going already! Geez..." Rodimus helmache felt a million times worse. Hopefully the blinding pain would make it hard to see Megatron. And hopefully time would pass quickly.

He told himself he wasn't going to do it. That once he was on the bridge, he would get right to work. Right up until the doors parted. His optics betrayed every thought he had had on the trip over, searching for Megatron. He found him quickly enough, and was unfortunate enough to catch him looking over as well. Their optics met awkwardly, then quickly turned away. Rodimus, to pretend to busy himself with a data pad. Megatron, to turn back to who he had been talking to.

After looking at the data pad, but not actually reading it because he was afraid he might fall asleep where he stood, he made a beeline for the captain's office. *His* office. With his chair and his desk. On which certainly sat some of his paperwork. But paperwork sounded a whole lot better than trying to talk to anyone on the bridge. Plus it had the added bonus of putting a wall between him and Megatron.

Rodimus closed the office door behind him with a sigh. His processor gave him a little less hell with the lights off, so they would stay like that. Another bonus to being in here. And since the data pads would just cause him more discomfort, he decided to just not bother with any work and find a nice corner to curl up in. Magnus would probably yell at him for slacking off later, but by then his helmache would either be gone or he would have enough engex in him to tune out everything he said. It wasn't like he'd be very productive anyways.

The floor was cold, which was great, but hard, which was less great. After Megatron's surprisingly plush berth, his plating protested. It had been coddled. Rodimus wanted to be coddled. But coddling was not on the itinerary for him. He'd just have to survive.

He tried in vain again to mimic Megatron's movements. His hands just weren't as good. But it did mean his hand was close enough to his face to shield his optics when the door opened.

Megatron stood in the doorway, confused, as he looked around the room. Once he found Rodimus cowering on the floor he shut the door behind him and turned on the lights just enough to see. They were dim enough that Rodimus' processor gave him a little peace, so he lowered his hand from his face.

"Why are you here?" Megatron asked quietly. "I told Ultra Magnus that you didn't need to come in."

"Yeah? Well, Ultra Magnus decided that I should. Says we need to learn to work together or some scrap like that." Rodimus kept his optics on the floor. Looking at Megatron would force him to look more directly at the light. The light was *evil*. Though he was left without much choice when Megatron joined him on the floor, his pede in his direct line of sight.

"Go to berth. I'll tell Ultra Magnus that you were here. It's not like you'll be able to get any work done in this state anyways."

"What, so you just don't want me around?" Rodimus' hard words hurt as they came out. They hurt his spark and their volume hurt his helm even more.

Calmly, Megatron said, "You need to sleep this off."

"Can't you just do that thing again?" Rodimus begged. If he had to be near Megatron he could at least provide him with some relief. Otherwise his proximity was torture on his conflicted spark.

"That's really not... *professional*," Megatron said.

"Neither is letting me sleep in your berth," Rodimus accused. Primus, why was he always trying to fight with him? They had to work together. It wasn't a choice. Well, unless he wanted to give up the Lost Light to him which was *not happening*. This was his ship and it was going to stay his. Megatron was temporary. A fact that both calmed and terrified him.

"Rodimus..."

"Look, I get it. You don't have to say it." Rodimus crossed his arms and looked away from him.

"As captain of this--"

"Co-captain!" Yelling hurt.

A pause. "As co-captain of this ship, it's important that I take care of the bots on board. Especially when the bot in question *is* my co-captain. Don't make me order you."

"Try and order me," Rodimus spat. "We're equal rank. Look, if you're not here to help me then just leave me alone. I'm going to get some paperwork done."

"No, you're not. You're going to sit here in the dark doing nothing. So you might as well go back to your hab suite and try and recharge."

"I'm *staying*. And I'm *fine*."

With a half-growl, half-sigh, Megatron stood up. But the relieved look on Rodimus' face was replaced by a look of surprise when Megatron pulled him off the floor. He at least had the decency to try and do it gently. Unfortunately, for big bots like Megatron, gentleness was just not in their programming.

"Ow! Let me go!" Rodimus shook free of Megatron's hold on his arm. He thought he would find grooves where his fingers had been but his plating was just oversensitive at the moment.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you."

"Yeah? Well, you did!"

Megatron flinched at that. Like Rodimus had just slapped him.

"Just leave me alone." Rodimus went to curl up again, but Megatron took hold of his arm again. This time, with a very light and very easy to break out of grip.

"Please, Rodimus. I never thought I'd have to beg you to stop trying to work. Just go back to your room."

The hand on his arm made his neck tingle with anticipation. If only he could convince him to do it again.

"I can take care of myself," Rodimus said, and as much as he hated doing it, he shook his hand off. It was doing neither of them any good by being there.

"Then take care of yourself by going to recharge."

"I'm fine!"

Megatron's optics grew stern. "I'll carry you if I have to."

"Try it." Rodimus glared back.

With the smallest of shrugs he bent to sweep him up into his arms. Rodimus managed to sidestep out of his reach, though. He circled Megatron and made a beeline for the door. Everything hurt but of all the pains his spark yelled the loudest. As long as Megatron was this close and not his, it would scream. His processor was easy to ignore in the wake of that noise.

"Rodi--"

The door to the office closed behind him.

Chapter 3

By the time Megatron was finished his shift and was able to look for Rodimus, he found him at Swerve's again. Nursing his current drink after who knew how many. Enough to make his movements lethargic. From the tired look in his optics, he could guess that he hadn't gone to recharge. He wouldn't be surprised if he had gone straight here.

Walking over, he braced himself for Rodimus to resist him or spew any number of hateful words at him. But he was able to get right up beside him before Rodimus even noticed his presence. It wasn't a good sign.

"Rodimus." He wanted to be gentle with him but he had to stay firm. Rodimus didn't need a push in the right direction. He needed someone to drag him in the right direction.

"Ooooooooooh greeeeat! It's the party police!" Rodimus then proceeded to imitate a siren, which had Ratchet scowling at him from another table. "Yo, Swerve, you need to add to your 'no' sign. Like, no no-fun people. Like Megatron. Or Magnus. Just anyone who exudes unfunness."

Megatron put his hand over the glass before Rodimus could take another drink. "This needs to stop, Rodimus. You've had enough."

With a jerking motion, Rodimus tugged the glass back. He took a defiant drink before he said, "What do you care?" Then he downed the rest of it before Megatron could stop him.

"You're setting a bad example. This isn't how a captain should act."

"I believe there should be a 'co' before that," Rodimus said, jealousy thick in his voice. "I'm not hurting anyone so just let me have some fun."

"You're hurting *yourself*." Megatron could feel just about everyone's optics on him. But if making a scene stopped all of this, then he'd make the biggest scene he could. To Swerve, he said, "Don't serve him anymore engex. He's had plenty."

"You can't do that!" Rodimus protested.

"I'm taking you home," Megatron decided. For once he was glad he had strength over his co-captain. It made it a lot easier to drag him out of the bar.

"Let me go!"

Megatron stopped and eased the grip on Rodimus' wrist. He still held him firmly enough so that he couldn't run off, but he wouldn't be hurting him now. Now was the key word, if the bracelet of dents had anything to say. There he went again. Hurting him.

"I'm sorry." His weak apology meant nothing. There shouldn't have been any reason to apologize to him in the first place.

"Whatever. It doesn't even hurt. Now let me go!" Rodimus yanked his arm, and created another small dent on the bottom edge of his hand. While it was Rodimus who caused it, Megatron still felt responsible. He let go, and thankfully he didn't run off.

"Let me walk you back to your room," Megatron offered.

"I can get back myself!" But Rodimus wobbled as he tried to walk, catching himself on the wall.

Megatron had reached to catch his co-captain, but stopped just before touching him. He'd invaded enough of the Rodimus' frame. He'd left too many marks. And those were just the ones he could see. "Let me help you." It sounded like he was begging.

"I don't need your help!"

This time, his hands didn't hesitate. He caught Rodimus by his waist before he toppled over completely, and then he scooped him up into his arms before his co-captain could protest.

"Put me down!"

Megatron didn't listen to him. He just started walking, avoiding the optics of everyone who passed. They stared openly as their captains passed, curious and a little amused at the sight. Rodimus' field flared with embarrassment, but it was this or watching him hurt himself as he stumbled back to his habsuite.

"Why won't you leave me alone?" Rodimus whined, choked up. He hid his face in Megatron's chest and did the only thing he could: hold on.

"I will once I know you won't hurt yourself," Megatron said.

"I'm *fine*," Rodimus insisted through the catch in his voice, followed by a hiccup.

"No, you're not."

"Whatever."

Rodimus didn't say anything after that. He just glared at Megatron's chest. The silence was better than the arguing, but a quiet Rodimus was a worrisome one.

In the end, Megatron ended up taking him back to his room again. He didn't want to intrude on Rodimus' space and he didn't want to leave him alone. Not to mention that he knew that he had everything he needed to take care of Rodimus there. Who knew if he even kept a proper supply of energon for himself.

"I want to go to my room," Rodimus complained as Megatron entered the access code.

"I'll take you there once you're feeling better," Megatron said.

Crossing the room, the dim lights slowly coming on, Megatron lay Rodimus down on the berth. Thankfully, he didn't try to escape. He just lay there as Megatron tucked him in.

"Do you want to sleep or do you think you can manage some energon?" Megatron asked. He jerked his helm away when Rodimus tried to make a move, only narrowly avoiding his lips. It pained him to watch Rodimus' face crumble from another rejection. "Rodimus, you're drunk."

"I don't care!" Rodimus pushed him away, folding in on himself. His frame shook and Megatron was about to remove Rodimus' hands from his helm before he could damage himself when they slipped away and Rodimus went limp. He could still see the blue of his optics. Barely. His voice came out dull. "Why don't you want me?"

Megatron sighed, ending on a growl. "It's not that simple, Rodimus."

Rodimus' gaze lifted weakly, and only for a moment. "Seems pretty simple to me. I want you, you

don't want me."

"You're drunk," Megatron repeated. "I don't want to take advantage of you."

"Sober me is as stupidly attracted to you as drunk me, so what's the difference?" Rodimus hugged his knees to his chest. "You don't want me now and you didn't want me this morning."

Megatron sighed. He'd already done too much damage. The dullness of his optics, the tremble in his frame-- he had put them there. By continuing to intervene and trying to protect him, he had done this. If he had left him alone, if he had kept his distance, he would be okay.

He sat down on the berth, his hand hovering as it decided where to come to rest. He chose the berth, because even if he just meant to comfort him, he knew how Rodimus would interpret a hand on his leg. "Rodimus, I don't deserve you." He looked at Rodimus while he said this. Made sure that he could see his optics. Then he let them fall back to the berth as he repeated, "I don't deserve you."

In his peripheries, Megatron saw Rodimus unfurl. He stopped his hands before they could find grey plating, and was once again face-to-face with Rodimus' pained expression.

"You're drunk," Megatron reminded him gently.

"I would do this if I was sober," Rodimus said. "If you actually want me, then what are you waiting for?"

"I'm waiting until you can actually consent," Megatron said firmly, returning Rodimus' hands to him. He watched them a moment more, but they made no move to rejoin them.

"So... tomorrow?" Rodimus' optics glimmered hopefully.

"Rodimus..."

"If you want me, then prove it. If it's really only the engex stopping you then tomorrow you should be fine with it."

"That's not--" Megatron sighed. He'd already said too much. "I can't give you an answer tomorrow."

"Then when? In two days? Three days? A week? I don't know if I can wait that long, but I'll try." Rodimus optics sparkled with hope. As beautiful as always. Seeing them so full of a positive emotion made it almost impossible to look away. But Megatron managed, standing up and crossing the room to his energon supply.

"Please, Megatron, just give me something," Rodimus begged. "This is killing me."

Join the club.

Megatron didn't say anything until he had a cube in hand. "Let me take care of you, Rodimus," Megatron said gently as he rejoined him on the berth. "If you do that, and that includes staying in berth and not having any more engex for a while, I'll give you your answer when you're feeling better. Now. Drink this."

He'd never seen someone drink energon that eagerly.

"Now, was that so hard?" Megatron couldn't help but say. He received a deserved scowl. Letting his voice return to gentleness, he added, "But try to drink slowly. You could make yourself purge."

"Can I stay here?" Rodimus asked.

"Of course." Megatron took the half-empty glass from him and deposited it on the berthside table.

"You should get some rest. And don't worry about work tomorrow. Just stay here, okay? I'll make sure to smooth things over with Ultra Magnus." He stood to go over to his chair for another uncomfortable night, when Rodimus caught his hand.

"Will you... stay with me?" Blue optics pleaded with red.

Megatron didn't know what to say. His spark shouted at him to climb in beside him and pull him in close. His processor, always the more sensible of the two, knew what that would imply. What Rodimus would think it meant. How could he convince him that they couldn't be if he couldn't even stop himself from doing this?

"I feel bad about kicking you out of your own berth," Rodimus admitted.

"You need it more than I do," Megatron said. "I'll be fine in my desk chair." It was a lie, of course. His back still ached from sitting in it for so long. He had to get used to lying to him. If he ever hoped to tell him to his face that he didn't want to be with him. That his spark didn't skip a beat every time he came on the bridge. That his smile was more intoxicating than engex had ever been.

"I'm cold."

Megatron couldn't help a little smile at that. "I can get you another blanket."

"But you're right here," Rodimus pointed out. "And I don't want to sleep alone."

Neither did Megatron. If there had been one good thing about the war, it was that he never had to spend any night alone if he didn't want to. Someone was always more than willing to keep him company. But the war was over. He couldn't always take what he wanted anymore. Even when what he wanted was wholly willing.

If only he could find an excuse.

Rodimus leaned forward and grabbed Megatron's other hand before he could move it, nearly pulling him down on top of him. Fatigue was lulling his movements, making a much younger Rodimus, even while drunk, hard to out maneuver.

"Please?" Rodimus pulled him down just a little more, securing a grip on his arm. "I won't try to kiss you again. I just don't want to sleep alone."

Megatron's processor turned to static as his spark pounded in his audials. All he could hear was a resounding "yes" from every component of his frame. Feeling Rodimus' fingers tremble against his arm, his shivering frame just begging someone to warm him.

So, he did.

He climbed in beside Rodimus, under the covers. His intentions at first were to just be a personal space heater. To lie on his back with his hands folded over his abdomen. Letting Rodimus glom off of him whatever warmth he needed. But Rodimus' little chirps and whimpers of need had his intentions thrown to the wayside. The more his hands pawed at him, the more he felt the need to give him what he wanted.

After a few readjustments, they found that the most comfortable position was with Megatron spooning Rodimus. Everything about this screamed unprofessional. Not to mention that Megatron

was taking advantage of a mech without the ability to say no.

"I shouldn't be doing this," Megatron said, breaking the silence. Voicing his concerns made him feel a little better. But only a little. He wouldn't absolve himself of this guilt until he let go. His arms felt anchored to Rodimus. Even more so when Rodimus snuggled his fingers in the spaces between Megatron's.

"Why not?" Rodimus snuggled just a little bit closer. "I'm not telling you 'no.'"

"Because you *can't*." In spite of his conflictions, Megatron nuzzled his helm into Rodimus' neck. His next ventilation was full of his scent, and he found himself shuddering from how exquisite he smelled. His spark was louder still, but his processor still managed to get its point over the din. This was so very wrong.

"I never regret cuddling," Rodimus tried to reassure him.

Nothing could reassure him, though. This night was sure to be as sleepless as the last. But he was selfish to keep Rodimus up with his voiced thoughts. Unless he planned to leave this berth. Something he wasn't sure he could ever bring himself to do. And like the monster he was, he hoped the night would never end. He wanted to keep Rodimus trapped in his arms. Trapped under his influence.

Chapter 4

Another night of forgotten memories. Or day? Rodimus couldn't remember when he stopped remembering. He couldn't even remember when he had started drinking. Without the cues from the sun, days often blended together on the Lost Light. If he didn't check his clock, he might not know when to send himself to berth.

Someone else had sent him to berth that night, though. He remembered a stern voice, and moving, and the next time he was aware again he was in Megatron's room. Again. Tucked into his berth. A half glass of energon on the table. Being taken care of.

Megatron was leaving him to let him sleep. He was going to spend another night in his chair. Displaced because Rodimus couldn't hold his engex. It wasn't fair of him to demand so much of his co-captain, so he found a very agreeable compromise.

"Will you... stay with me?" He had meant it to give Megatron his berth back. But the ever-present engex refused to let *him* leave, so the compromise. They share it. Only it sounded more like he was begging Megatron to sleep with him. *Beside* him. He knew not to push the envelope much more.

The conflict on Megatron's face... it gave him hope. If he didn't want to share a berth he would just say so and that would be that. He wanted to. That much Rodimus knew. Now if only he could convince him.

"I feel bad about kicking you out of your own berth," Rodimus said. Especially when it was so soft. So much more welcoming than even the comfiest chair he had ever sat on.

"You need it more than I do," Megatron said. Rodimus could tell he was lying. Megatron may think he was the master of deception but it didn't take long to figure out that his optics glowed just a little dimmer whenever he lied. Maybe that was Drift's influence. Watching for a change in someone's optics. "I'll be fine in my desk chair."

"I'm cold." Not a complete lie, but if he cocooned himself in the blanket, he'd heat up soon enough. He was glad that his frame shivered enough to make it convincing.

"I can get you another blanket," Megatron said with a smile.

"But you're right here." And much better than any blanket. A blanket couldn't hug you back. A blanket couldn't reassure you that you weren't alone. "And I don't want to sleep alone." He left the pitiful words as they were. If pity coaxed Megatron in, then that was good enough. He'd take a pity cuddle.

He just stood there, though. Staring at Rodimus. But his optics were out of focus; he wasn't really looking at him. He stayed like that for some time, until Rodimus couldn't wait for his answer another moment. He seized the opportunity to grab Megatron's other hand and pull him back to the berth.

"Please?" His hands climbed his arm, holding on as tightly as his inebriated limbs would allow. He assured Megatron, "I won't try to kiss you again. I just don't want to sleep alone."

To Rodimus' astonishment, Megatron got into berth with him. His frame was so close. Touching him. But it wasn't enough. He was just lying there. He tried to roll him over, but he doubted that even a sober Rodimus could move a Megatron who didn't want to be moved. It was only once he shifted onto his side of his own fruition that Rodimus received the closeness he craved.

He snuggled in close, gripping Megatron like he could leave at any moment, because he could. Maybe this was just some dream his drunk processor gave him. Something to ease him off to sleep so he could sober up. But he'd take this dream. For as long as it lasted, he would enjoy every moment.

Rodimus knew he should recharge, and it nagged at his optic covers, but he didn't want to risk losing this beautiful moment. Sleep was winning, though. He couldn't manage to keep his optics open.

Shifting just enough to give his frame a little jolt of energy, he cuddled closer. To his delight, Megatron hugged him just a little bit closer. Slowly they closed the miniscule gap between them. As close as two mechs could be.

This time, he didn't fight his exhaustion. It would win this time. And if this were a dream, Rodimus could find it again.

"I shouldn't be doing this." Megatron's voice surprised Rodimus. He had thought he was already asleep.

Rodimus slid his hand along Megatron's arm until he found his hand. He let his fingers slip into the spaces between his, overjoyed when he left them there. "Why not?" He wiggled closer, closing the last few microns of space between them. "I'm not telling you 'no.'"

"Because you *can't*." Megatron's words were said through grit denta, contradicting his actions when he nuzzled his helm into Rodimus' neck. He shuddered against him, and Rodimus worried for a moment that he was stealing all of his heat.

"I never regret cuddling," Rodimus told him. Which was true. And he had cuddled tons of bots while drunk, and not once had he wished he hadn't done that. It was always better to find out the morning after that all you had done was *cuddle*. No one who wanted to cuddle ever had bad intentions.

Rodimus didn't know if Megatron had said anything after that, because sleep had won the final round. The last thing he remembered was Megatron's arms holding him tight, and his ventilations warming his neck.

When he woke, he woke to Megatron's hand on his neck. His processor didn't have a chance to make him miserable. Rodimus knew that one of them had to leave eventually. Someone had to captain the ship. Maybe Ultra Magnus could do it on his own. But he knew Megatron wouldn't allow that. It would rouse too much suspicion. Especially after he had now twice carried Rodimus from the bar. That much had come back to him. He wouldn't really care if the crew knew, but he knew that Megatron would.

It couldn't be helped. Eventually Megatron and his magic fingers had to leave the tiny piece of heaven they had created.

Rodimus sighed contentedly. He had him now. That was what mattered.

"Can you sit up?" Megatron asked, sitting up himself. He kept his hand at work though. While his other hand was at the ready to help his co-captain upright.

"Yeah. Don't wanna, though." He snuggled closer to Megatron's hip, closing his optics to stay in this half-online state. It was peaceful there.

Megatron's chuckle was warm. "I have to leave soon. I want you to have some energon before I go. I'll put a painkiller in it."

"Do you have to go?" Even if he had convinced himself that there was no way around it, he was still going to try.

"If you would prefer to go in my place, I--"

"Point taken." Rodimus thought about wrapping his arms around Megatron's waist. One, because he wanted to, and two, because it would keep Megatron with him for a little longer. He resisted, like he did with many of his feelings around him, but he did rest a hand on his thigh. Bold, and definitely pushing it, but it was easy enough to remove himself from. So, if Megatron really didn't want his hand on him, it didn't have to be there. But he left it. So Rodimus counted that as a victory.

With what sounded like a pained sigh, Megatron said, just above his ventilations, "I can stay a little longer."

Rodimus smiled from audial to audial and hid it against Megatron's hip. No matter what his answer was, he would hold onto this memory fondly.

Megatron sighed. Quietly, he said, "You're not going to make this easy are you?"

At least, that's what Rodimus thought he had heard. He couldn't be sure. He sat up and the movement had Megatron's hand move away from Rodimus' neck, which sent a surge of pain to his processor. He held his helm. This pain was even worse than yesterday's.

"Here." A glass with blue-green energon was held before Rodimus' face. "Drink this."

As soon as Rodimus took hold of the drink, Megatron returned to his task. He took a cautious sip, knowing that the green tint meant it was medicinal, but when it hit his glossa he only tasted a faint sweetness. Either this was the tastiest medicine Rodimus had ever tasted, or Megatron had taken the time to make him something palatable. His spark told him it must be a sign that Megatron liked him.

With the sweetness still on his lips, and confidence raging through his veins, Rodimus went in for the kiss. For the first time, completely sober.

Megatron dodged his attempt at a kiss. "Not yet."

Those words made Rodimus' spark soar. A "not yet" just meant another time. It wasn't a "no!" But then Megatron continued.

"You're still not better. I told you I'd give you my answer once you're better. Give it a few days, then ask me again."

A few days? It might as well be a few years. The next few days were sure to be full of obsessive clock-checking. Counting down the hours and minutes until he could sleep again so that it would be one night closer to what he wanted.

"Stay here for today. When my shift is over I'll walk you back to your room, and then I expect you on the bridge the next day. If you have any engex, I'm not going to give you your answer. Is that clear?"

"Got it."

Megatron's face softened a little. "If you need anything, comm me. And finish that." He pointed to

the energon.

"Okay. And, thanks, Megatron. I know I can be a bit of a pain to deal with." He tried to smile back, but he let it fall when he found it wasn't genuine.

"Just focus on feeling better."

Tentatively, Megatron removed his fingers. He watched Rodimus as the pain took over again, and waited until he had gotten used to it and it became somewhat manageable. There was still a glaze to his optics, and speaking wreaked havoc on him, but he'd dealt with far worse hangovers with less at his disposal. He'd survive this one. Wrapped up in Megatron's scent.

"No matter what happens, Rodimus," Megatron stood, "I don't want to see you trying to drown yourself in engex. It won't help."

Rodimus really didn't like what that request implied, but he was getting tired of this. Plus, he'd drunkenly tried to jump Megatron on multiple occasions. It might make him feel better in the short term, but if Megatron didn't want him, he didn't want to risk trying to get him in berth again. At least sober him realized that forcing himself on him wouldn't work. And the helmaches were getting really old.

"I know," Rodimus admitted.

With a little nod, Megatron took a half step away from the berth, then he took a step closer to the headboard and rearranged the pillows. There were more than had been there the first night. Meaning more than one. Rodimus had been very thankful for that. In his own berth he slept with no less than five. Of course, three of those were meant to emulate another bot. He wasn't really fond of sleeping alone.

"Lean back," Megatron said softly. And once Rodimus did as he was told, Megatron pulled the blanket up around Rodimus' hips. Essentially tucking him in.

Rodimus tried to repress the blush but it won over. With Megatron being so nice, not to mention having him so *close*, it was all too much for his cooling systems. They had packed their bags and were long gone, leaving the red flush unrestricted access to his frame.

Just as Megatron was finishing up, he stopped to look at Rodimus, only to realize how close their faces were. But Rodimus knew better. He wasn't going to try again. He was going to be patient. He would wait. He would-- was Megatron getting closer?

Red optics closed to slits, lips slightly puckered as they moved towards Rodimus forehead. He closed his optics in anticipation. Maybe Megatron's lips would help ease the pain.

"I'll... I'll see you later."

Rodimus was left un-kissed.

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Sorry this got kind of sad. It's a tragic ship, y'know? But I hope you enjoy it nonetheless!

"Well?"

Well, indeed. Rodimus had been surprisingly patient. This was a few days later, during which Rodimus hadn't had a single drop of engex. And he had gotten most of his work done. Not *all* of his work, mind you, but for Rodimus, it was an improvement. For the past couple of days Megatron had thought about how to extend this. Any way to make Rodimus put in some good, honest work. But he was as impatient as he was (currently) diligent. He was going to bring it up sooner or later.

Sighing, Megatron stepped out of the way and invited his co-captain in.

"Sorry," Rodimus apologized once Megatron closed the door behind them. Fiddling with his hands, he said, "I've been trying to wait-- I really have!"

"No, Rodimus, it's alright." Megatron stopped him before he fell into one of his rambles. "You have been patient." He leaned back against his desk, looking at the same spot on the floor that Rodimus was. It was the closest he could get to optic contact right then.

The silence was awkward. Rodimus shifted far too much as he waited for Megatron to say something, and Megatron stayed far too still as he waited for Rodimus to say something. Neither wanted to break the silence. Neither wanted to stay in it. The conversation had to be had. But starting it...

"I'm..." Megatron paused when he saw Rodimus start out of the corner of his optic. He realized how much crueller this new silence was, and the continuation was no less agonizing. "... proud of your work ethic, as of late. Ultra Magnus and I agree that it's a marked improvement."

Rodimus' spoiler dropped so low it almost disappeared behind him.

Megatron clenched the fist that was hidden from Rodimus' view. If he was going to reject him he should just get it over with. It wasn't going to get any easier with time. There was no more procrastinating this. It was now or never.

"Rodimus..." Even these seconds were torture. Why was he doing this to him? He couldn't say that he cared about him if he put him through this so *why*?

A barely audible sigh flowed out of Rodimus' vents. "Should I leave?"

"No."

Now if only he could say that when Rodimus asked him if he wanted him. He wished he could switch his answers. Then he would have said "yes." And maybe that would have been enough. Discourage Rodimus from trying again. He'd find someone else, in time. He'd look back on this as another bullet from him that he just barely dodged. There was damage there, yes. But it wasn't fatal.

This was a shot he had to take. At this point, it was up to Rodimus to get out of the way. But he knew he wouldn't. He'd take it straight to the spark.

Blue optics rose to look at Megatron's face. He waited for Rodimus to speak, but it was clear that he wouldn't until he met his gaze. It was hard-- much harder than charging onto any battle field. Taking lives, revolting-- those were easy. Looking into his optics and being honest with his feelings, this was the real battle. An unseen one. At most, there would be two casualties, and they would only be casualties to them. Everyone else would go on unawares. They would be forever changed. But somehow, he found the bravery. He was probably feeding off of Rodimus'. For he was brave to even be around him.

Red optics met blue.

Rodimus took a half-step forward.

"Do you like me?" Rodimus asked. "Yes or no?"

"This is complicated, Rodimus. It's not as simple as a 'yes' or a 'no.'"

"Only because you're making it that way," Rodimus argued. He let his optics shift back to a softer tone when they turned angry. "Mine's a 'yes.' But you knew that already. So all you have to do is say 'yes' and we can take it from there, or you say 'no' and I leave you alone. We'll go back to the way things were and pretend this never happened."

"If I were any other mech--"

"Then I wouldn't be here. I like *you*, Megatron. All I need is for you to be honest about your feelings. I won't be hurt if you say no. Well, that's a lie, but I'll be okay. But you're giving me a lot of false hope if you keep dragging it out like this."

Closing his optics for just a moment, just enough to remind himself why this couldn't happen, Megatron said, "Let's sit on the berth."

"I think this will be easier if I'm standing." Rodimus smiled sadly at the floor. Then his optics swept up and forced Megatron to look into them. Silently pleading for an answer. Silently hoping for the one that Megatron could not give him. "Please, Megatron. Just tell me."

"Have you thought about this?"

Rodimus broke into a fit of laughter. Bending at the waist, one arm leaned on the desk to keep him upright while the other clutched at his abdomen. Megatron just watched him with his hands raised, unsure of what to do. Was he sick? He probably needed to be sick to see past everything he'd done. Especially what he'd done to *him*.

"Have I thought about this?" Rodimus said through the last bit of laughs. "No, Megatron, I got drunk one night and had a fleeting thought about how great it would be to frag you and haven't thought about it since-- of course I've fragging thought about it!"

His sudden anger had Megatron taking a step back. Just one, though. He'd rather have him yell at him. At least he knew he deserved *that*.

Ventilating heavily, Rodimus seemed to fold in on himself. "Sorry. I didn't mean to yell."

Quietly, to their pedes, Megatron said, "You should yell."

"What?"

"You have every right to yell at me, Rodimus." Megatron sighed and leaned more weight onto his desk. "If not for my past, then for this. For dragging this out. For letting you think that this might happen. I've been nothing but cruel."

Rodimus' spoiler fell, but just a little. He smiled a little. In understanding. But he was sad. His field screamed that for him just fine. "So, you don't like me?" There was still a question there, though not a hopeful one.

Megatron gripped the edge of his desk until he left dents. "It's not that simple."

"Then make it that simple. If you really think we shouldn't be together then just say 'no.'" Rodimus voice quavered. "I'll understand. I'll understand even if you do have feelings for me. I know that this won't be an easy relationship if we have one. I know this, but I don't care. It's worth it." He took another half step forward. Too nervous to take full ones. "But if you can't tell me 'no,' then I know it's because you know the reward is well worth the risk. But I still need an answer."

The desk creaked under Megatron's hands.

"Please, Megatron." Rodimus' optics pleaded with him, his whole frame shaking.

Megatron bit his lip, but the words still tumbled out. "Yes. Yes, Rodimus, but--"

He stopped himself when Rodimus closed the gap between them. He wrapped his arms around Megatron's neck and was just getting onto the fore of his pedes when he seemed to remember something and put his weight back on his heels. Hopefully he'd come to his senses, or remembered the first time they had come this close. That while his spark may race in his presence now, once he had tried to snuff it. And he'd nearly succeeded.

But Rodimus' concern came from a different source.

"Can I kiss you?" he asked.

Practically lunging for him, Megatron brought their lips together. It wasn't the prettiest of kisses, but it was enjoyable. More than enjoyable. Breathtaking. And it was far better than any fantasy his mind had been able to conjure up. If every kiss after this was even *half* as good, Megatron would still be in awe when their lips parted.

He wanted to bring him to his berth. To do something-- anything. This. To hold him. He didn't care if they interfaced or not. He wanted to, but then, he wanted to do this too. He wanted to be with Rodimus.

But as he tugged towards it, Rodimus pulled more firmly away. His spark lurched, already used to and needing his closeness, but the sparkle in Rodimus' optics, and the fact that his hand had curled around his own, threading their fingers together, had it swelling once more.

"I want to do this properly," Rodimus said.

"Properly?"

Rodimus' optics turned shy, his voice following suit. "I want to court you, Megatron. If you'll have me."

He'd never been courted. He didn't even know that bots actually *did* that. At least not anyone who

wasn't rich. Everyone he'd ever known before the war hadn't had the credits to spare on frivolous gifts or expensive dates. You were lucky if you found something more than just someone to frag. Feelings were dangerous.

"You don't have to, Rodimus. I want to be with you." It became easier to say the more he said it.

"I want to." Rodimus smiled.

"All I need is your company, Rodimus. Nothing more. Don't waste your credits on me."

"Oh, well, uh, not that I don't *want* to buy you things and all that, but... I meant I want to court you *Nyon-style*. It's... well, most of us couldn't afford much, but we wanted the same sort of ritual. Something to show when we really liked someone. It's not that much, really..." Rodimus looked a little away from Megatron. "Mostly I just want to take you places. And... I dunno, I guess I want to give you an out if you want it? Like, you're probably going to realize you don't actually like *me* and just, like... I dunno? I just..."

Megatron tilted his chin up. Met that doubtful gaze. Squeezed the hand that had an iron grip on his. His optics and hand relaxed just a little, but the trepidation was still there.

"It's not necessary, Rodimus. I've had my taste, and I want more." He leaned down just a bit, but stopped before he fell prey to those lips again. "But I won't object if you wish to court me. I only request that you don't spend any credits on me. What I want I can only get from you. What I want is priceless."

Rodimus met him halfway to kiss him again. He smiled into it, and was quick to pull away. Megatron would have been sad if he weren't immediately greeted by his beaming smile.

"Can I take you somewhere now?" he asked. "We've both got a free day. And we're within range of a planet that I love." When he saw Megatron's lip curl up a bit, he added, "Yeah, it's organic, but it's uninhabited. And I promise there's something there that you'll love."

Megatron smiled. Because unless Rodimus left without him, that would ring true.

"Alright, Rodimus. Lead the way."

He was exuberant as he pulled Megatron to the door, but he started when the hall light hit them, and released Megatron's hand. It felt cold and alone as it fell to his side, and he quickly snatched Rodimus' hand back, seeing his spoiler hitch back up and his helm turn with a confused look in his optics.

"I'm not ashamed of you, Rodimus," Megatron murmured. "But I will let your hand go if you would rather not be seen with me like this."

Rodimus' response was to cement the grip by interlocking their digits, and return to pulling him along.

They passed by only a few, and got an equal amount of strange looks. Normally Megatron would have felt mortified under their gazes, but he was lost in the blissful feel of Rodimus' field. His own field could do nothing but emulate it. Bliss fed back on bliss until nothing existed beyond the feel of his hand and the sheen of his smile. He was even able to begrudgingly ignore that they were taking the Rod Pod. Thank Primus they were going somewhere uninhabited.

A quick jump later, and they were landing. It was night there, and that disappointed Megatron a little. After years of looking out the ship's windows and seeing nothing but darkness, he would have

liked to indulge in some daylight. But Rodimus' smile was so beautiful he forgot why he was ever upset.

"Come on!" Rodimus took Megatron's hand and all but dragged him out of the Rod Pod.

Stepping on land-- especially land that gave way a little under his pedes-- was extremely disorienting. Had he ever been on an organic planet he hadn't set out to conquer? Well, first time for everything. If only Rodimus would give him some time to adjust. But he had to run after him. He supposed he could stop. He was stronger than him. But to rob him of that smile would be his most heinous crime.

Already he felt organic matter clinging to him. He hated the way it found its way into seams and clung like it belonged there. Hopefully the second place Rodimus wanted to bring him to was his washracks. Maybe he'd join him.

Such an intimate idea. It had Megatron's systems running hot. Now he was glad to be running. When his cooling fans came on Rodimus would excuse it for the exertion.

"It's just over here," Rodimus said, pointing. "We have to hurry or we'll miss it!"

Where he was pointing didn't seem to have much of anything. Just an expanse of rock that seemed to go on forever. He almost didn't see it against the near-black sky. It looked like the world simply... ended.

Rodimus slowed to a jog and then to a walk, and finally came to a stop a few steps from what turned out to be the edge of a cliff. It was still too dark to see anything, and if it weren't for the faint orange glow on the far horizon, Megatron might think there was nothing but a black void at the bottom of the cliff.

"Just wait," Rodimus promised.

But Megatron just watched him. Watched as he made his own light when he smiled. Saw his biolights pulsing with excitement. And for the first time since he had noticed that he was doing that, watching him, he didn't feel guilty about it. He should still feel guilty, for indulging in him, but he wasn't. He refused to be.

"You're beautiful," Megatron said it as though he were in a trance.

"You're gonna miss it!" Rodimus fret, forcibly turning his helm back to the horizon.

He was a little saddened to tear his optics away from him, but the sight before him was nearly as breathtaking. A sliver of sun peeked over the horizon, and a line of light swept over the land, revealing the planet a little at a time. While the plateau they were on seemed devoid of all life, the valley before them was brimming with green. For an organic planet, it was beautiful. But the light kept going, until it hit their frames, and that was when the true show started.

The rays of sunlight fell upon Rodimus' frame, turning it to gold. It looked as if he was making his own light; a rival star. He shone brighter than any sun, for he was Megatron's Sun. The only one in all of the universe, that would allow mere mortals to gaze upon him. That would allow someone so vile something so precious.

Megatron couldn't help himself. He turned his frame towards Rodimus, and once he did the same, he cupped his chin and kissed him. He tasted like stars. Galaxies were born on his lips. And here he was, granted the honour of savouring them.

All too soon he had to stop, but it would always be too soon. He could do this forever. If only every touch didn't feel like corruption. Megatron was in the last chapters of his life. There was no way to know how many pages remained, but they were far less than Rodimus'. He would love nothing more than to have novels filled with their story, but it would be a short one if they were to have it. It made Megatron's optics turn sad as he looked at his Sun, so he closed them once more, to taste such sweetness again. If only for a short time.

"Are you sure about this?" Megatron couldn't help but ask, his lips still close enough to Rodimus' that they brushed as he spoke.

"Hm? About what?"

"About me." Megatron looked right into his optics. "About this. About *us*."

"Yeah... But you? Don't want to?" Rodimus assumed, spoiler falling.

"I do, Rodimus, do not mistake my hesitation for unwillingness." He embraced him, closing his optics and resting his helm on top of Rodimus'. "I worry for your sake. For your fate. Any time you give to me is time wasted for you."

"Shut up, it is not." Rodimus' nuzzled against his chest affectionately. "And all I do is waste time. Might as well waste it with you. Now quit trying to change my mind. Because I've tried it. Doesn't work. You're stuck with me."

Megatron felt himself smiling. "There are worse bots to be stuck with."

Shifting his pedes, Megatron felt the dirt itching at his pedes. He released Rodimus just enough to get a look at his face.

"Not that this isn't beautiful," Megatron said, "but why here?" *On this organic planet*, he didn't add.

"I might have... read one of your poems," Rodimus admitted, looking sheepish. "It was about the sun, and I know this isn't Cybertron or anything but maybe this sunrise will come close or something. I dunno. I guess this is dumb."

Quietly, Megatron asked, "Did you like it?"

"The poem? Uh, yeah, I mean, as poems go. I still don't really *get* them, y'know? But it was pretty."

Should he tell him? He should tell him. Should he? Would he even care? Yes. He should. Though this relationship was doomed to fail, he refused to found it on lies. Even insignificant ones like this.

"Rodimus, I think I should tell you..." He took both of his hands, happy that he could do this. That Rodimus wanted him to. It was still surreal, and he still wished that Rodimus would reconsider his choice, but it was still nice to be able to do.

Rodimus was fixated on the hands dwarfing his own. Then on the face of their owner. "Tell me what?"

"That poem is about you. I wrote that for you." Megatron felt the blush on his cheeks and hoped that Rodimus wouldn't notice how flustered he was. "You are my Sun."

Megatron's blushing was nothing compared to the crimson taking over Rodimus' face. He had to

retrieve his hands to cover it, laughing a little.

"What? No, I don't believe you." Rodimus' voice turned kind of sad. "It was all about, like, giving life and stuff. I don't do that. I don't give life. If anything..." His optics faded to a dim blue. A cloud across his Sun. He swallowed, repeating, "If anything, I..."

Strong arms pulled Rodimus in close. A hand cradled the back of his helm, tucking it against his chest. "You can't live your life shouldering this burden, Rodimus."

"But... Pipes, Trailcutter, *Skids*, and... and Nyon..."

"You made choices, and they had consequences."

"I made the wrong choices!"

"Do you think you're the only one who has made bad choices?" Megatron asked in a quiet voice. He didn't want to make this about him, and he wasn't exactly thrilled to think of his own, but he didn't know how else to comfort him. And seeing him this distraught... He never wanted him to feel like this. He wanted to make him happy.

"That's different."

"Is it?"

"We were at war."

"A war that I started."

That had Rodimus pausing.

"How do you live with it?" His voice quivered like his frame.

Megatron hugged him that much tighter. "I do my best to fix it."

"What if it can't be fixed?"

"Then I accept what has been done and do my best to never do it again." After another moment of silence, he added, "I'm not perfect at it. No one is. Sometimes we have to make a mistake a few times before we figure out the solution. Have patience with yourself."

"Some first date," Rodimus muttered. "I can't even get this right."

"Hush, Rodimus." Megatron stroked his back. "You've done nothing wrong."

"But you're not supposed to be comforting me I'm supposed to be impressing you!" Rodimus clung onto him, though.

"I am impressed."

Rodimus helm looked up, confusion in his flaring optics.

"So much hardship has befallen you, and yet you do not succumb to it. You press on, you continue to do what is right. I admire you. I wish I was more like you."

Rodimus scoffed. "Right."

"You saw that there was evil in this world. You saw that, and I offered you a place among my ranks. I saw in you a Decepticon."

Rodimus bristled at that, and rightfully so.

"But what the Decepticons became, that was not for you. You may have been forced to kill, but it came from compassion, not anger. You've never killed to further your own goals or to prove a point. And the fact that you aren't able to shrug them off-- that they sit with you-- shows that you care. That if you were able to, you would have changed their fate. And Rodimus..."

Megatron swallowed as he waited for Rodimus to look up at him. The lump in his throat only grew when he saw his optics. They had been so bright before. Now they looked barely lit.

"How many of those deaths, the ones you are letting weigh so heavily on your spark, how many of them, can be linked back to me?"

He could carry this burden. What were a handful of deaths on his extensive list? He was well beyond redemption, anyways. But Rodimus. He still had a chance. His life shouldn't be ruined by this.

"They weren't you," Rodimus argued weakly.

"Overlord was my creation. The DJD as well."

"But I made the choice about Skids. That was all me." Rodimus pressed his face into Megatron's chest. Right against his Autobot symbol. It still didn't feel right. He didn't earn it.

"From what I was told he offered himself knowing full well what could happen," Megatron soothed. "And may I remind you that it was because the DJD had come for us. You devised a plan while I was a coward. I should have been there with you from the start."

"You saved us."

"After I put you all in danger."

"But *you* still saved us."

Megatron put his hand under Rodimus' chin, but he didn't force it up. He waited until Rodimus allowed him to do so. Then, looking into those flickering optics, he murmured, "If I recall correctly, *you* then saved *me*."

Rodimus' optics fell. "Selfish reasons."

"Twice now, Rodimus. Twice now I was ready to leave it all behind and accept my fate. And twice now you have convinced me to keep going. The second time you risked your own life. If you were willing to do that for someone like me, I know that you would do that for anyone. But you can't save everyone, Rodimus. Not every mission is a success." He kissed the top of his helm, hugging him even tighter.

Rodimus mumbled something.

"What was that?" Megatron asked gently.

"I'm sorry," Rodimus said, lifting his helm from his chest just a little.

"You have nothing to apologize for, Rodimus."

"I'll understand if you don't want me anymore."

Megatron wanted to laugh at that, but it would likely only upset Rodimus further. Instead, he said, "You'll have to try harder than that if you want to get rid of me."

That coaxed a bit of a smile out of Rodimus. And for now, that was enough.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Is this too schmoopy? Probably. Do I care? Nah.

"Can I make a request?" Megatron asked upon their return. He looked back at the trail of dirt they had left from the shuttle bay and could already hear Ultra Magnus screaming internally. "Perhaps a mechanical planet next time?"

Rodimus laughed. It was nice to hear him laugh. Even nicer to know he'd been the one to make him laugh.

"I could help you with that." One of Rodimus' optic ridges shot up.

"Oh?" Megatron smiled, knowing full well what he meant, but wanting to play with him a little. "And what do you mean by that?"

"I think you know." Rodimus smirk spoke volumes. "The question is: your place or mine?"

"Whatever you're more comfortable with."

"My place, then." Rodimus' hand slipped into Megatron's. "I've got some... ahem... *fun* upgrades there, if you know what I mean."

He didn't, but he was happy to find out, albeit slightly afraid.

Nodding in the direction of his habsuite, Megatron said, "Lead on."

Passing by new bots, they got new stares. Rodimus still seemed oblivious to them, and Megatron could almost forget them, too. Almost. He wondered what Ultra Magnus would say, if he would say anything. Word had likely spread to most of the crew by now. Especially if it had made it to Swerve's. He tried his best to ignore them. To not care what they thought. And he didn't care how it reflected on him, because the bots who cared likely already didn't like him. But he did care how this might reflect on Rodimus. It niggled at the back of his mind like a scraplet.

In front of Rodimus' door, while punching in his access code, he said, "I will still get you clean, though. Don't you worry. I'll just also be getting you a little dirtier in the process."

Megatron swallowed as a rush of heat went straight to his array. His cooling fans clicked on, right before Rodimus' followed suit. He hoped his field wasn't betraying too much of how he was feeling, because there was a little embarrassment there when he thought of how long it had been. He hoped he could keep up with the speedster.

Rodimus all but pulled Megatron's arm out of its socket as he dragged him across his habsuite to the little door leading to his washracks. He slid it open, throwing a flirty smile over his shoulder as he pulled Megatron in. Then he stopped, just staring at the white wall ahead.

"Oh, slag," Rodimus said when Megatron closed the door to the washracks.

"Something wrong?"

Rodimus sighed. "No. Not really. Just... I mean the whole point of courting means that you don't frag, right? And now we're about to shower together, and... I dunno... I said we were gonna, well, I didn't say it outright, but I'm sure you thought we were... We still can, I guess..."

Megatron chuckled. "Is that all?" He picked up one of Rodimus hands and kissed it gently. "Well, I, for one, think that courting can entail whatever we choose. That being said, I would never force you into doing something you weren't comfortable with. If you don't want to interface, for whatever reason, we won't. I will never expect that of you. All I assumed we would be doing, is helping the other get clean. After all, it's far easier with a partner."

"You think?" Rodimus asked. "About the making our own rules thing?"

"I do." Megatron intertwined their digits.

"Oh. So. You wanna?" His face flushed a bright red as he looked up at him. His optics dropped to the floor. "Actually, no, I wanna make our first time special. If that's okay?"

Smiling down at him, Megatron asked, "May I kiss you?"

"Of course you can." It looked like Rodimus was trying to contain his smile, and failing. "You don't have to ask for that."

"I want to." Megatron tilted his chin up. "Because now I know that you want this." He leaned down and kissed him gently, pulling him in just a little by his waist. Once they parted, he said, "Rodimus, I want you. Know that I do. Our first time will be special because I will be interfacing with you. Whether it's in a shower or a berth."

"Well, I at least want it to be in a berth. Maybe with some candles or something."

"Never would have pegged you for the romantic type." He kissed him again when Rodimus grew flustered. "I like romantic," he reassured him.

"So hey, uh..." Rodimus couldn't meet his optics, and he seemed to just be making himself more flustered as he struggled to say whatever it was that was on his mind. "Could we still, uh, like, make-out and stuff? Like get hands-y with each other?" He covered his face. "Primus, sorry, I just... sorry."

Megatron chuckled. "Of course we can, Rodimus." He kissed his forehead when Rodimus' hands inched off of it. "I don't think you understand how much I enjoy touching you. You have a delightfully responsive frame."

Rodimus' throat flexed as he swallowed, and Megatron hungrily focused on it. If Rodimus would let him, he wanted to have his lips and denta all over it. Pulling at all manner of wires and cables. He could practically feel Rodimus' fingers clawing at his back, his ventilations loud in his audial. Though right then, Rodimus' hand went to the tap, which he turned on.

Megatron flinched out of the stream when the icy cold water hit him, but Rodimus seemed content as steam rose off of his frame.

"I need a cool-down," he admitted. "I hate you for being so damn hot."

"I think someone lacks self-control," Megatron teased.

"Shut it." Rodimus shivered, then sighed as the water warmed up. He stepped to the side and made some room and asked, "You comin' in?"

Steam still rose off of Megatron's plating when he reached his hand out to test the water, but it was at a comfortable temperature. Plus, there was a gorgeous speedster that he was neglecting. He made sure to remedy that, dipping down to give him what he told himself would be a quick kiss. After all, it was clear they were both quite revved up and Megatron wanted to respect Rodimus' request to refrain from interfacing, but he lingered on those sweet lips. Rodimus still seemed quite conflicted on the matter, hooking his fingers in firmly on Megatron's back.

The dirt clinging to his pedes still bothered him, though. So, to distract himself, he indulged himself in that supple neck. As he moved down to it, Rodimus let his helm fall back and offered it to him. Gleaming with a sheen of water.

It was delightfully warm. Now Megatron could feel when Rodimus took a sharp intake. When he moaned. The vibrations tickled his lips and made him want to create more. He tested Rodimus' threshold for pain with a light nip that had his co-captain gasping and arching his frame up against him.

One hand held that arch in place, keeping Rodimus close to his frame. The other caressed plating while his fingertips ran down seams. He finally got to touch his spoiler. That constantly twitching, flicking, and flapping thing, that he couldn't help but watch. To feel it was a whole other thing, especially knowing that it's movements were caused by him. Just like the soft moans and groans.

"Woah, woah, stop," Rodimus gasped.

Megatron let off of him immediately, a little fear alighting in his optics. "Did I hurt you?"

Rodimus gave a snort of laughter. "No, I'm fine, just... really fragging turned on," he admitted.

"Oh." Megatron laughed with him.

"Yeah, I, y'know, just... I wanna, but--"

"Shhh, Rodimus, It's alright. I understand." Instead, Megatron left a chaste kiss on his cheek. "If you want to stop, you don't have to explain yourself. A simple 'I don't want to' will suffice."

"Is it really okay though? I mean I let you come in and, I mean, I was enjoying it, and I feel like I'm leading you on and--"

"Rodimus, Rodimus, Rodimus..." Each utterance of his name came out more slowly and quietly than the last. The third 'Rodimus' ended with Megatron's hand cupping Rodimus' wet cheek, while making sure that he had his optic contact. "Even if we were in the middle of interfacing, if you decided you didn't want to anymore? We would stop. If we had done everything right up to the point where we would interface, and you decided you weren't feeling it anymore? We would stop. If you didn't want to rush into things, and we were feeling each other up in the shower and you ask me to stop? We stop." Megatron gave him a sympathetic, though concerned, look. "Did someone ever make you feel like you couldn't say no?"

"What? No! I mean, not really. I just generally don't tell people to stop," Rodimus admitted.

"Fraggings fun, y'know? I'm just not always one hundred percent into it."

"Well, I want you to be," Megatron told him. "It may not always be processor-blowing, but when and if we interface, I want you to be sure that that is what you want to be doing right then. You are never obligated to interface with me. Ever. No matter what we had been doing up until that point,

or even if we made plans. I want you to be comfortable around me."

"I-I am. Comfortable."

Another sympathetic smile. "Let's get cleaned up, shall we?"

"Let me help you first!" Rodimus blurted out.

Megatron chuckled. "I won't say 'no' to that."

All Megatron really needed was his pedes cleaned, but Rodimus insisted on cleaning every inch of his frame. Even the parts that Megatron could easily reach. About a third of the way through the process, he realized just exactly how much frame Megatron had. In the beginning he'd been careful to clear every seam and scrub every bit of plating to a shine. Now he skipped over the small seams and just stuck to getting the plating to passable. Megatron didn't mind, though. He hadn't been too dirty to begin with. He did enjoy the care Rodimus took in his hands, though.

He'd assumed the first one had been done that way because Rodimus was still trying to do the best job he could. But even after Rodimus let his perfectionism slide, he still stopped to really give that second hand the care it deserved. Though really, he might have just wanted to touch it.

Rodimus bent and unbent Megatron's fingers, making sure to wipe at every part of the joints that he could. He made sure he was never too rough with the nerve-heavy metal. Never scraping or rubbing. They were already quite clean to begin with. Megatron detested smudges on his data pads, so his hands were given quite a few cleanings throughout the day. But he wasn't about to stop Rodimus from carefully running a cloth-wrapped finger up the inside of his own. Like he had with the first one, Rodimus left a kiss on his knuckles when he was done.

Megatron found himself really relaxed once Rodimus got to his waist. His care returned once more as he worked the vents there, and the gentle caresses of the cloth felt heavenly. He had to keep himself from getting excited again. It didn't seem to take much from Rodimus.

Finishing up the last few details, Rodimus switched up the cloth for a thick sponge. He squeezed some soap onto it and gave it a quick run under the water, scrunching and squeezing it until it was good and sudsy.

"Is it alright if I...?" Rodimus left the half-asked question hang in the air, hovering just above Megatron's hips. Surely he could feel the heat radiating off of his panels, and Megatron hoped it wouldn't make him feel guilty. It wasn't Rodimus' fault.

"I won't stop you," Megatron told him, "but if you aren't comfortable cleaning there you don't have to."

"I'm cool with it," Rodimus said, trying to be aloof. His shaking hands betrayed his nervousness.

Megatron nodded. "Then you may proceed."

Megatron sucked in a quick ventilation when the sponge made contact with his heated spike cover. That touch made him realize just how aroused he really was. He had to bite his lip to keep himself from moaning, and then he had to shut his optics when watching Rodimus' hands work over the area became too much.

A beep alerted him to a popup on his HUD, asking him if he wanted to detract his modesty panels. He dismissed that command just as Rodimus moved on to his valve cover. It had been a long time since he'd interfaced, and longer still since he'd used his valve. Even without the direct stimulation,

having another bot's hand there was bringing back very pleasurable memories that made him want to make more.

Megatron grabbed Rodimus' wrist perhaps a bit too forcefully. His co-captain flinched and dropped the sponge, and it landed with a wet slap on Megatron's pede.

"Sorry! I just--"

"No, no, Rodimus, that was my fault." Megatron lifted his hand to his lips, kissing the back of it gently. "I fear I was enjoying your cleaning a little too much." He stooped down to pick up the sponge. "I think it might be best if I finish this part."

"You'll still let me do your pedes right? It's my fault they got so dirty in the first place."

Megatron smiled at him and placed a kiss on his forehead. "If you really want to, then yes. But it's truly not that much of a problem."

"I know, but... I dunno I just want to do this for you?"

"Alright, Rodimus." Megatron shook his helm a little. Once Rodimus got an idea in his processor, it was best to just let him finish it.

Both of them looked a little sheepish as Rodimus awkwardly turned so he wasn't watching and Megatron quickly cleaned up his array. He did his aft while he was at it and his inner thighs. Anything that might be a little too sensitive for Rodimus to handle. He grabbed the nozzle and quickly rinsed and then told Rodimus, "I'm done."

Turning back to him, Rodimus nodded towards the bench. "Sit there and I'll finish."

Megatron did as he was told and sat while Rodimus got to his knees. That brought some very inappropriate thoughts to the forefront of his processor. All Rodimus would have to do is push his face in between his thighs and--

"You alright?"

It took Megatron a moment to register that Rodimus had said something, then a moment more to focus his optics on the face before him. His face flushed even more, and it didn't help that Rodimus had rested his hands on his thighs.

"What? Yes. I'm fine." Megatron looked just beside his helm when he couldn't meet his optics.

Rodimus chuckled and started smoothing the sponge over his thighs. It felt heavenly. A little too heavenly. And Rodimus was straying quite close to his array. It was teasing, knowing that this would go no further than this. He should tell him to stop but he didn't want to stop this feeling. He'd deal with himself later in his quarters, after Rodimus got him good and revved up.

"I like making you feel good," Rodimus commented, as though he'd read Megatron's mind. "But let me know if I go too far again, yeah?"

Megatron swallowed when he looked down and saw Rodimus' optics, tinged with lust, making sensual circles on his thighs. "You're doing fine," he told him. His voice cracked when he said the word "fine" and Rodimus giggled. It made his face flush a deeper red with embarrassment, but his laugh had been far too cute for his own good.

He hadn't realized just how much he'd wanted this. How much he wanted *Rodimus*.

"Rodimus," Megatron murmured.

"Too much?" Rodimus assumed, his hands coming off of him.

Megatron just gestured for him to stand, then once he did, he put his hands on his waist, giving it a little tug. He didn't force him into his arms, but Rodimus went anyways, and they kissed softly and sweetly, even though Megatron's array throbbed and begged him to do more. They pulled apart once, and Megatron was just about to let him go when Rodimus dove back in, and this next kiss was neither soft nor sweet.

Without opening his optics or breaking their kiss, Rodimus straddled him. His arms wrapped around him and he subconsciously ground his pelvic plating against Megatron's.

Megatron couldn't help but let his hands explore Rodimus. Though it was practically torture to keep them off of his aft and burning array. He settled for his thighs, but he had to keep his grip tight.

"Rodimus--" Megatron tried to say when Rodimus stopped for air, but it wasn't for long. When it became too much Megatron pushed his forehelm forward the next time Rodimus tried to change position. "Rodimus..." He squeezed his thighs perhaps a little too hard, though Rodimus didn't seem to mind. "If I am to honour your request and not interface with you in this shower, I will need you to get off of me." He nuzzled his way into the crook of his neck, ventilating steam onto it and feeling him shudder. "You are too much of a temptation."

He couldn't help but kiss his neck, and he could tell it was definitely distraction for him. Each kiss caused a hitch in his ventilations. "Frag, I want to, but--"

"I know, Rodimus. I'm not asking you to explain yourself again, but I fear my willpower is not very strong when you are literally in my lap." He laughed a little at that, pulling away from his neck.

Rodimus laughed, too. "Yeah. I get it. One more kiss?"

Smiling, Megatron pulled him back in, and kept it as chaste as he was able, while keeping his hands on Rodimus' waist. Once it was done, Rodimus did get off of him and resumed his cleaning, this time at the knee. It was far easier to keep himself under control now.

"I am... really excited, though," Rodimus said, not looking up from his work. "With you, I mean. When we do, I mean. Uh... yeah..."

Megatron put his hand over Rodimus, stopping his cleaning for just a moment. "You don't have to be nervous around me, Rodimus."

"Are you not nervous?" Rodimus asked him.

"Not so much *nervous* as I am worried," Megatron answered honestly, putting his hand back on his lap.

"Oh. Um. Okay." With slow circles, Rodimus resumed his cleaning.

After a moment of awkward silence pass, Megatron said, "I want to thank you again for doing this. Your hands are much gentler than mine."

"I probably missed a lot of spots. You would have probably done a better job."

"I'm sure you did fine, Rodimus. It was just my pedes that needed a good cleaning." Megatron would have told him that the real treat was feeling his hands all over him, but he thought that may

lead to more touches and he wasn't sure he was even going to make it back to his own hab suite without releasing the strain on his modesty panels.

Megatron never thought that having someone scrub at his pede could be intimate, but, there they were. Careful yellow digits picked the dirt out of seams, using the nozzle so the spray would fall upon them until every particle was flushed out. He worked more diligently on this than on anything he'd ever seen him do in his life. A part of him wanted to think about how he could apply this to his other work. The larger part, though, just wanted to watch and enjoy. So he let the pleased sigh out as it came. He even groaned with relief when Rodimus cleared a particularly clogged joint.

"That feel better?" Rodimus asked with a slightly teasing tone.

"Much. Thank you."

"Your frame really doesn't do organic, huh?"

Megatron frowned. "It's... It feels unnatural."

Rodimus shrugged. "To us, it is. But to them, *we're* unnatural. Two sides of the same coin, if you ask me."

"Cybertron doesn't leave too many lingering reminders," Megatron pointed out.

"Then I guess I'll just have to clean your pedes more often," Rodimus said. Then he added, "I hope you'll let me do this again sometime. Maybe once we've...? Y'know... So I don't have to stop." Rodimus cleared another seam, flicking the gunk from his finger. "Though maybe then we just have the shower for show."

Megatron smiled at him when Rodimus stuck his glossa out of the side of his mouth in concentration. How this mech was able to make him go from wanting to frag him through the berth to thinking he was one of the cutest things he'd ever laid optics on, he would never know.

At this point, he'd probably let Rodimus do whatever he wanted to him. But all he said in the end was, "I'd like that."

Rodimus finished his cleaning mostly in silence. He would hum at times but never for long enough for Megatron to guess the melody. It was a sweet sound to hear nonetheless.

After they both had one final rinse, Rodimus tried to towel Megatron off as well. He politely turned down his multiple offers, saying that he was getting tired and that it would be quicker for them to do it themselves.

Now at the door, they were kissing again, and again Megatron was tempted, but he would restrain himself until he was alone.

"I could walk you home," Rodimus offered.

"That's sweet of you," Megatron kissed his forehead, "but I'm alright walking myself back."

"Okay." Rodimus' disappointment was only apparent in the slight tilt of his spoiler. "See you tomorrow?" he asked as though they didn't both have a shift together.

Megatron wasn't about to point that out, though. "See you tomorrow," Megatron agreed, leaving one last kiss upon his lips.

Once he was out the door, he forced himself to walk normally, even though he couldn't remember ever being this revved up in his life.

In his berth that night, Megatron tried something he hadn't done in a long time.

Chapter 7

Megatron wasn't a valve mech. He wouldn't really call himself a spike mech either. While both sensations felt entirely different, neither of them seemed more pleasurable than the other. He'd taken to the role of primarily using his spike, but that was only because that was what the majority of his partners had wanted. Back when he actually had an active interface life, he would assume that was what they wanted.

Now it looked like he might be sharing a berth with Rodimus. Someone who he wanted to satisfy, no, take him even *beyond* satisfaction. And he had no idea what he liked.

He would ask him, of course. But if Rodimus turned out to be a spike mech...

Megatron also wasn't one to self-service often. Things rarely managed to arouse him, and he found the act to more often than not be more trouble than it was worth. But when he did, he would use his spike. It was much easier to clean up a few spurts of transfluid than it was to deal with the mess of lubricants on his thighs and berth.

He knew that his spike was functional, and he was sure his valve was too, but it must have been millennia since he'd actually used it. Horror stories from bots who hadn't used it in a long time found that it failed to function properly, if at all, flashed through his processor. He didn't want to disappoint Rodimus if that was what he wanted, and, if he was honest with himself, he would miss it.

Taking a deep ventilation, he tried to calm himself down. He could feel the wetness behind his panel, so that at the very least still worked, but if his calipers refused to cycle open, no amount of lubrication would solve that problem. And there was no way he would be visiting Ratchet to fix something like *that*.

Well, only one way to find out.

A gush of lubricant dripped from his valve when he let the cover slide away. He was glad that he had had the sense to put a towel down before he started this, or a wet berth would have been in his future.

Taking a deep ventilation, Megatron let his hand slide down his frame. That was always what got him aroused. Feeling his partner's hands on him. It wasn't the same when he did it to himself, but it felt nice enough. Though this night the memory of Rodimus was fresh enough to get him back to where he had been in the shower.

He could practically taste Rodimus' lips. Feel his thighs in his hands. Hear his soft ventilations bordering on moans.

Megatron couldn't keep his hands from his array for long.

He started with his anterior node. A few soft rubs, testing its sensitivity. A little more sensitive than he had remembered, but then again it had been millennia. It felt good. *Really* good. Soon enough he was coaxing out his first overload.

When Megatron opened his optics, ventilating hard, he found that one wouldn't satiate him. Which was the strangest thing. Whenever he did self-service, it was just to rid himself of built up charge, and he'd done that. But his frame demanded more. *Begged* for more. He started rubbing again.

After his second overload he had to decide if he was going to ignore the potential problem in the

hopes that it would sort itself out, or if he was going to try. Rodimus may have revved him up some, but eventually the feeling would pass. He didn't have all night.

Closing his optics, Megatron imagined himself back in that shower. The warm stream of water hitting his plating. Rodimus all over him. Slowly, the speedster's fingers travelled south just a touch more, teasing at his valve lips. The touch did little more than excite him for what was to come. It was only once he parted those lips and sank his finger inside of him did he finally get the stimulation his frame had been begging for.

Megatron sucked in a quick ventilation and held it as the finger pushed gently on the walls of his valve. The calipers opened with relative ease, but it was only once they fell back into place that he let the air out of his vents.

Feeling much better, Megatron released the tension held in his frame. All but his optics relaxed. Those he still held tightly shut as he delved back in simply for the enjoyment of it.

The fantasy slipped from his grasp just as a moan slipped from his vents. Never would his thoughts ever compare to the reality of his suitor. What a fine thing Rodimus was. A fine thing that was just within his grasp. If he reached out, he could take a hold of him and never let him go. And, oh, how he longed to do such a thing. If only the act wouldn't leave him tainted. Broken. Cast a shadow upon even the brightest of suns.

Nothing good could come from this.

Megatron shoved a second finger in rather roughly and dispelled his thoughts. He couldn't dwell on those fears now. Worthwhile endeavour or disaster, he'd already started the journey down the road, Rodimus at his side. Either they would walk hand-in-hand into the sunset, or both be caught in the implosion of their relationship.

His fingers worked their way deeper at the expense of his wrist. The aching made him wish that he had at least one toy. But everything he'd brought on board the Lost Light had been thoroughly scrutinized, and while the idea of some poor Autobot having to check and make sure that his false spike wasn't some deadly weapon, he didn't want to have to endure the embarrassment of passing it over to them. And it wasn't like he could just *buy* one when they stopped, if he was even able to find some place selling such a thing.

Megatron pushed in deeper still, despite his wrist's protest. It would ache in the morning either way, and this way had him hitting far more nodes. He bit his lip to keep from moaning, but out it came anyway. Low and long, and only slightly muffled from his attempts. Reaching an even deeper node yanked a louder one out of him. He could only hope no one had been passing by his door at that moment.

The next thrust of his fingers sent a sharp flash of pain through his wrist and up his arm. He pulled out quickly, strings of lubricant following his hands and falling wetly down into his frame. He huffed and laid back, still in need of a release.

Curse this frame. His younger self would have thought him pathetic to be hurt so easily. Four million years of war, and he was felled by a little self-service. *Incomplete* self-service, no less.

He shifted up the berth, having the sense to drag the towel up with him. It was awkward positioning himself with only one hand to use, but he managed. Legs spread, back curved in a way that would prove to be painful later but would serve then, he set back to work. The discomfort remained, but it stayed at a bearable level. Even at his finger's deepest, the pain stayed in the past.

He thrust harder. Faster. Until the discomfort became masked by the pleasure.

More, more, his frame begged like it never had before. It wanted Rodimus, of course. A thing he could not give now, or maybe ever. But beg, it still would. Even after he was finished riding the crest of his next overload.

Rodimus emptied out his drawer full of toys and looked at them in dismay. While he still hadn't seen it, he was sure that none of these toys even came close to being the size of Megatron's spike. He'd never really wanted anything that big. It was too much work to cycle his calipers open with something smaller and work his way up, when the first one would bring him to overload just fine.

There was no way Megatron was going to let him spike him. The ex-leader of the Decepticons? Totally a spike mech. And even if he did want it, Rodimus' spike was too small to satisfy him.

Taking a deep ventilation, Rodimus lay back on his berth beside his small mound of toys. There was a wet heat behind his panels that he had to take care of regardless. He was probably wet enough to take the largest one right away. He was relaxed enough on his own. But how was he going to be able to relax when that massive spike was entering him? The flash of perceived pain was enough to have Rodimus crossing his legs.

Start with the node. It was nigh impossible for himself to hurt himself that way.

Okay, Rodimus, deep ventilations. If he didn't let what happened today happen again, he'd have plenty of time to prepare himself for Megatron. But he had to start tonight. Had to start *now*. He had work in the morning, and frag it all, now, more than ever, he wanted to impress Megatron. Show him that their relationship wouldn't change anything. He could still be responsible. He *could*.

After a bit of fun, anyways.

Always a bit (okay, a lot) of a performer in berth, bots would find Rodimus a strangely quiet mech while self-servicing. Nothing seemed like it was worth a moan. Maybe a gasp, but nothing more. Self-servicing was a means to an end. One that he partook in more often than he cared to admit. So not alerting the rest of the ship to such a practice was a high priority.

Okay. Ventilate.

Rodimus wasted no time on foreplay on himself. Not that he needed it after their shower. Frag. If he weren't so afraid of what Megatron's spike would do to him he would have interfaced with him. He felt bad about lying to him. He did want it to be more special, but not enough to deter him from the act. Did he hate him? He probably hated him now. Rodimus certainly never liked when mechs left him high and dry.

His fingers rubbed furiously at his node as soon as he let his modesty panel click open. A few overloads could take him anywhere. Away from this doubt. This fear. This uncertainty. But also from the wonder and the overwhelming *happiness*. Something about him... something was different. Mechs before Megatron had made his spark race. They had made him feel light and made his tank do flips in his gut. They had revved him up and fragged him senseless. But... not like this. Never had he been so afraid to lose someone. And, cruelly, had someone so easy to lose.

Time. Time was against them. The others, they had time. All the time they could ever dream of. Time enough to do whatever they wanted to do. To go wherever they wanted to go, and then some. But them?

No, no. Self-service. Don't think about it. *Ventilate*.

The first overload left much to be desired. He was abruptly thrown over, almost confused as he curled in on himself and rode it out with scrunched optics and a twitching spoiler.

Valve still rippling with the aftershocks, Rodimus grabbed the biggest toy he had and shoved it into himself. He keened and closed his legs a little. Not quite pain, but close, pricked at his array. Too hard, too fast. Exactly what he should be. What bots expected of him. What Megatron likely expected of him.

Keep going. Hard and fast. *Rodimus style*.

He set a steady pace. Optics shut tight and forcing his mouth to do the same. Still, he couldn't help the occasional huff that managed to escape his heated frame, nor the sounds that could have been read as pain or pleasure. Rodimus still couldn't decide from where they stemmed.

Faster. *Faster*. Harder. He slammed the false spike into himself. Right to the point of pain and then a touch beyond. He should stop. He *wanted* to stop. But with Megatron's size, this would be par for the course. Better to get used to hiding it now so he wouldn't worry him. It was bound to happen whether Megatron intended it or not.

Eventually his calipers adjusted and the pain subsided. Returning to a place of pleasure, Rodimus felt himself smiling a little. He slowed down a bit, to roll onto his side. He imagined that this position would be a lot more fun with someone else to hold his leg up, but it got the job done. Allowed him to get a little deeper, too. Right up to his aching ceiling nodes that *sang* from the contact. They were about the only ones that hadn't felt the stretching pain.

He let himself enjoy this for a while. Not quite to his second overload. No. He didn't deserve that yet. *Work then play*, Megatron had gruffly told him many a time. He'd be proud of him for this, yeah? Even more so when they had no issues interfacing.

Rodimus slapped on a determined look that fell away as soon as he returned to the hurried pace. The kind of pace bots used for a quick and steamy frag in a storage closet. After an entire day of flirty looks and dangerous touches. An act Rodimus wasn't unfamiliar with. Something that shouldn't have been a problem after what had happened today. He'd had more than just a few touches. Was more than just a little riled up. Why was this so hard?

And this? This toy? It wasn't enough. No way was Megatron this small.

More. He needed more. And he needed more *now*.

While he still kept up the unforgiving pace, his other hand rummaged through the pile of toys for... something. He didn't know what yet. Not until his fingers found a slender vibrator. Something to open him just a little bit more.

He couldn't help but tense up as he nudged the smaller head up against his valve. It was already pretty snug on that first toy. He'd taken bigger than the first one but the second one put him just a tad over. And it didn't account for the weird shape the two of them would make.

Biting his lip, Rodimus pushed. He stopped almost immediately. Not because he felt any pain, but because the pressure felt like a prelude to it.

"C'mon, Rodimus," he whispered to himself. He took a deep ventilation. "You can do this."

Rodimus strained his neck to double check that his door was, in fact, locked. He'd done quite a few

embarrassing things in his life but he didn't want to add someone walking in on him while he gave himself a pep talk to shove something up inside of himself.

"Relax." Rodimus closed his optics as his helm sank back into the pillow. He focused on his ventilations and massaged his anterior node with his free hand. He focused on how good that felt. Thought about how nice it would be to feel truly filled. How nice it would be to be filled with *Megatron's* spike. Feel his hands caress down his waist again. His voice deep and gravelly in his audial.

Rodimus pushed just the head of the vibrator in. He keened and bit his lip once again, trembling. It didn't exactly *hurt* but it didn't feel all that great either-- and this was just the head! Barely any nodes had much pressure on them. Only a couple of calipers were being forced open more.

Taking short, loud ventilations, Rodimus hissed, "Just push it in all the way!" Like he was ordering a partner.

In a rash and likely stupid move, Rodimus shoved his palm up against the base of the vibrator. *Hard.*

It went in, not quite as deep as the first, but Rodimus was glad that it was quite short. It *hurt*.

Shaking and letting out a low whine, Rodimus rolled around on his berth. He wanted to take them out, but he would have to face the pain now or later, and as much as his present self preferred the "later" option, there was no way he was going to cut his first time with Megatron short just because he couldn't handle his spike. Rodimus wasn't going to mess this one up. It had taken so much to get Megatron to this point and he wasn't going to jeopardize that.

When the pain became more bearable and his calipers relaxed just a little, Rodimus put a shaking hand to the bases of the toys. He gave them a light tug and yelped when a new flash of pain hit his array. Even his spike was throbbing in its housing.

He tried to take deep ventilations. Tried to relax. But each one was cut short from the pain and held for a moment, and his frame had never felt tenser. He *had* to face this now. Megatron wouldn't want to stop and let him adjust to it.

Gripping the bases once more, Rodimus clenched his denta and slowly dragged them until they were almost out of his valve. It would be so easy to just let them slip out, but with another hiss Rodimus pushed them all the way back in.

Every node protested from the stress. *Begged* him to take them out. Self-servicing was supposed to feel good, but interfacing was supposed to feel better. He was going to do everything in his power to make sure that that rang true, even if it meant enduring something unpleasant in the present. All for his future. His future with Megatron.

After a few more slow thrusts, the pain seemed to subside. That, or Rodimus got used to it. It was toeing the line of pleasure, anyways.

To distract himself even further, he used his free hand to rub at his node, which sent waves of pleasure through the rest of his array and made the fullness far more bearable. At least until he started to near overload and his calipers rippled and cycled down.

The first wave had Rodimus crying out in pain and had his hand flinching away. The waves slowly turned to ripples and then died out while his node ached from being so close and then denied its release. He just lay on the berth for a while, readjusting to the girth. He gave the bases a few testing

presses, and while it didn't feel good it wasn't excruciating.

Determination fuelling his stupidity, Rodimus started pushing them back in and pulling them out. He moaned quietly, hoping the sound would distract him and fool himself into thinking that this was actually good. But they all ended on a note of pain that he couldn't shake no matter what he did.

Megatron was going to hate him. He just knew it. What good was he if he couldn't interface with him? He'd leave him the second he realized he couldn't use him for this.

At least the ache in his spark was just as bad as the pain in his groin. It allowed him to thrust a little faster. Not nearly fast enough for fragging. Not enough to satisfy the one doing the spiking, anyway. But it was all he could manage. It felt like he was splitting himself in two.

Eventually the toys used up most of his lubrication. Chafing added to the pain of being spread too wide, and Rodimus couldn't take it anymore.

He tossed the toys aside and curled into the fetal position. He didn't even bother trying to close his valve cover. That idea on its own made his array throb with pain, and his valve lips had plumped out because his lack of release had left all his fluids pooled there. Once he pulled his blanket over his shaking frame, he didn't feel quite as bad, and the pain was subsiding to something that he could sleep through.

Still, his fatigue refused to take him.

Pulling up his comm list, he found Megatron's name. Listed in his frequent contacts. Their past text conversations came up, strictly professional. But the *::Thinking of you::* text Rodimus sent ruined whatever deniability he'd had there. Though it was the fear of pushiness and clinginess that had Rodimus shutting off his comm before he could receive an answer. Or worse, not receive one at all.

Chapter 8

Rodimus did his best to walk normally onto the bridge the next morning, but the dull ache between his legs persisted even now. It was hard to hide the worry that he'd damaged himself down there, too. Wouldn't that be just the best thing to happen? Finally getting Megs in berth, and he'd torn his lining or popped a caliper or something.

He half-forced a smile when he saw Megatron look over at him. He turned away quickly, pretending to busy himself by looking over the shoulders of the crew. Checking their current course. Fuel levels. None of the numbers stuck. Each just a distraction from the stinging pain of each step. From the conflicting pain and yet overwhelming lightness of his spark.

"Rodimus."

Flinching at his name in that gruff voice that he'd last heard right beside his audial, Rodimus turned robotically. He almost unironically put up a salute. He didn't even know what to say. Sir? No. Co-captains. Equal rank. Right. This didn't have to be weird.

"Uh, yeah?" Rodimus said as nonchalantly as possible.

"I need your opinion on something." Megatron waved him over without even looking up at him.

Frag. He looked mad.

Without anything else to lie about or say he was busy with, he walked over. Slowly. Trying to keep his gait normal and without gritting his denta. Making sure that when he came to stand beside Megatron, he stood with a hip out, even though it hurt to stand that way. Gotta look casual. As casual as everyone expected him to be.

"Sup?" he asked.

With a glance at Ultra Magnus standing nearby, Megatron said, "We have a quantum jump planned today but I'm worried about how close the planet in this sector is." He pointed to the area on the star map.

Rodimus gave him a weird look. "I mean, it's not that close, right? We've been closer before."

"Do you think? Hm..." Megatron considered the map another moment, then gave Ultra Magnus another glance as he moved elsewhere. Then he stooped down to whisper in Rodimus' audial. "Are you alright? You look like you're in pain."

"I'm fine," Rodimus lied. But he could feel better by tomorrow. Maybe. So maybe he wasn't lying. Maybe.

"Are you sure?" Megatron pressed.

From the pit, someone muttered, "First Tailgate with Cyclonus now *Rodimus* is shacking up with a Decepticon."

Rodimus just barely caught the comment. Storming over to the captain's chair, he stood before it. "Who the frag said that?" he demanded. No one owned up, of course.

With an annoyed growl, Rodimus stepped down into the pit where the crew sat and then climbed up

onto the front console. Everyone gave him a weird look, and Rodimus wasn't all that great at reading expressions. No one stood out to him.

Clearing his throat, he said, "I *said*: who. The frag. Said that?"

"Rodimus, get down from there!" Megatron ordered. He pointed a finger to the floor the same way Magnus did whenever he climbed things that ought not to be climbed.

"What, and just let the crew talk to us that way?" Rodimus crossed his arms, hiking up his spoiler. "We're in charge here!"

"You're making a scene," Megatron hissed.

There were a few snickers from the crew. Rodimus didn't catch who, so he gave them all a sweeping glare before hopping down. He crossed his arms again as walked to Megatron's side.

"Maybe you should take some time to calm down," Megatron suggested gently, resting his hand on the small of his back.

"Aren't you mad?" Rodimus asked, not caring to keep his voice down.

"*Please?*"

That was when Rodimus saw the tinge of redness on Megatron's cheeks and felt the mortification in his field. He'd embarrassed him.

He wasn't going to mess this one up.

"Yeah. Okay. That's probably a good idea," Rodimus whispered, resigned. He allowed that hand on his back gently lead him back to the door he'd only just come through.

"I'll handle this," Megatron told him.

"We're both supposed to be on duty," Rodimus fought with whatever bit of fight was left in him.

"And I said, 'I'll handle this.'" Megatron gave him a small nudge, forcing Rodimus to take an unintended step. "You're too hot right now. Go out to the hall and cool down for a minute. Then we'll talk."

"I'm not some sparkling you need to give a time-out!" Rodimus hissed.

"Then stop acting like one!" Megatron all but smacked the button for the door. "I'll come get you in a few minutes."

Megatron shut the bridge door on him, and even locked it to make a point. Not that Rodimus couldn't override it if he wanted to. But that would make him as much of a sparkling as pouting would. Which was happening then, despite his best efforts. The indignant twitching of his spoiler didn't help this whole "mature" thing.

Even with the door shut and locked, Megatron's voice still carried through.

"I would like to give a *gentle* reminder to the crew that what two bots do in the privacy of their own hab suite is no one's business but their own." He was using that commanding tone that Rodimus found pretty hot. Just the way he took charge... Even with his array hurting like it was, the idea of him using that voice in berth sent a rush of warmth south. "It is also in no way a work appropriate topic and will not be tolerated on my ship, and especially not on my bridge. Is that understood?"

"Yes, sir," came the response. A few seemed less-than-thrilled.

"Good. Now get back to work."

Rodimus moved his hands to his hips and lifted his helm, dropping the pout, expecting Megatron back through that door in a moment. After maybe a minute, he dropped his helm, thoroughly bored already. Stupid plain walls. They could use a splash of colour. Like most of life. Maybe *flames*. Yeah. All over the ship. It was *his* ship after all! And it being his ship meant that Megatron couldn't just order him around!

He just about stormed back onto the bridge to give him a piece of his processor when Megatron returned.

"Is that any way for a captain to act?" Megatron asked him once the door to the bridge closed.

"It got their attention, didn't it?" Rodimus pointed out.

Megatron's hand went to his face while a sigh slipped from his vents. "Yes, it did, Rodimus, but that is not the kind of attention you should want. You need to demand their respect by setting out the ground rules."

"I know how to captain my ship!" Rodimus snapped.

"Evidently, you don't."

Rodimus took a sharp, offended ventilation in. His spoiler halves came up stiffly.

"Didn't you hear what they said?" he argued. "They called you a Decepticon!"

"And?" Megatron crossed his arms. "It wasn't the first time and it certainly won't be the last. I've been called far worse."

"But you're not a Decepticon!" Rodimus hated how his voice cracked with emotion.

Megatron just looked at him for a moment, then away at the floor, nodding a little to himself. "I see."

"You see what?"

"I'm not the one who cares if bots will see me that way." Megatron uncrossed his arms. "Rodimus," he sighed, "Rodimus, I can say anything, claim anything, and even if what I say is true-- even if I know that my choosing to be an Autobot is genuine-- some bots will not see it that way. I've long since come to terms with that. I don't think *you* have."

Rodimus opened his mouth a few times, thinking angry and confused thoughts that showed on his face as a chaos of expressions. Finally, he said, "So, what, I can't defend you?"

"I don't think you *should*." Megatron's optics dimmed with sympathy. "Sweetspark," he paused and let that word hang, both enjoying how it rolled off of his glossa and how Rodimus' optics sparkled. "Sweetspark," he repeated, taking a ginger hold of one of his hands. "I think that it is admirable that you want to defend me and, yes, yourself in some ways. But you will exhaust yourself once you realize how many enemies you are up against."

Falling against him, Rodimus hugged Megatron tightly. He received a pat on the back, and that was enough for now.

"... perhaps you should take the day off."

"I calmed down!" Rodimus protested. He looked at Megatron's badge when he gave him a slightly amused look. "I'm calm. I want to work."

Shaking his helm while he chuckled, Megatron left a kiss upon Rodimus' helm. Then he sighed once more. "If you don't want to tell me what's happened that's fine. You're entitled to your privacy. Though I do wish you would confide in me."

"It's not important. Really."

"Well... You've clearly hurt yourself somehow. You should take some time off to heal, or perhaps see Ratchet if--"

"No!"

"Alright, alright." Megatron raised his hands in surrender. "Just a suggestion. But if you won't go to him, then rest. For me?"

Rodimus slid his hands up Megatron's chest, sticking his aft out and slowly waving his spoiler. The overt suggestiveness of his actions turned him on a little, too. He couldn't help but wince. Still, he carried on. "And what will you give *me*?"

"You drive a hard bargain, little one." Megatron held him out at arm's length. Rodimus started to look disappointed, but then Megatron bent at the waist to whisper in his audial, "I'll come see you after my shift."

Rodimus perked up at that. Beaming and shining like the sun Megatron knew him to be. The fire burnt out when he took a few steps, wincing with each one as he made his way back to his hab suite. Still, he made sure to throw Megatron a flirty look, only showing the slightest bit of pain in his optics.

Megatron smiled after him, but it fell when Rodimus turned the corner.

The sun and the moon. Said to be lovers. And yet the sun brought so much more than the moon ever could. And when they met, the moon blocked the sun's light. What they called love was just *jealousy* wasn't it? Stopping the beautiful sun from doing his job. Stealing his spotlight. His *everything*.

Optimus put him on the ship. Against Rodimus' wishes. Stealing half of the job that was *his*. More of it, more often than not. Even today.

Could he... could he do this?

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

WHOA it's certainly been a while, huh? I feel like you guys are gonna hate me more after this chapter, but here it is.

Enjoy~

Megatron forced his face into neutrality as he softly rapped on Rodimus' door. He hoped, just a little, that Rodimus either wouldn't hear it or that he, too, had come to the same conclusion and would ignore him. But things were never that easy, and Rodimus opened the door with a big smile on his face. At least it seemed like he'd gotten over what had happened that morning.

"Come on in," Rodimus said, making a sweeping gesture with his hand.

The room beyond him was dim, the lights having purposefully been turned down. It had a romantic air to it that Megatron should have been honoured to receive, but it only made him sad. It felt more oppressive than anything.

Megatron said nothing as he entered the hab suite, and Rodimus was quick to skip off once the door was closed. Pain still affected his gait, though not as it had ruled him earlier. Just enough to be able to tell if one had already noticed.

"Sit down!" he threw over his shoulder. "I've got something for you."

With a sigh, Megatron let himself sink into Rodimus' couch. "I told you not to get me anything," he said a little crossly. Rodimus was going to make this hard.

"I didn't buy it," Rodimus assured him. "Not really, anyways. I don't even know if they're good, but, 'A' for effort?" He smiled as he brought a tray with a small pile of energon goodies. "Sorry there isn't much. I kept messing up the recipe. But hopefully this tastes good? I haven't tasted it."

"Rodimus, you didn't have--"

"Yeah, yeah, but I did, so eat!" He grabbed one and held it right before Megatron's mouth. When he opened it to tell him again that he didn't need any gifts, Rodimus popped it in.

Sweetness flooded his glossa as the treat melted. His optics closed in spite of himself, and he sank back into the couch as he savoured the thing. He even *moaned*, and Rodimus chuckled at that. He might have given him a soft glare if he weren't enjoying the candy so much. It had been forever since he'd had an energon goodie, and after only being able to consume Fool's Energon, it was quite a change.

"So? Good?" Rodimus ventured.

In the bliss of the sweetness, Megatron said, "*Heavenly*, my dear." Only a moment passed before he regretted the words. Sitting up straighter, he began, "Rodimus, I--"

"Drift helped me with them," Rodimus said excitedly, sitting down next to Megatron. He leaned on

his shoulder. "He's *way* better at making them, but I'm glad they're at least *edible*."

"You... worked really hard on these, didn't you?" Megatron asked quietly.

"It's not like I had anything better to do." Rodimus waved his hand nonchalantly. Awkwardly positioning his hand, he offered another sweet. "Have another! Unless you were *lying* about how good they were." His optics glinted mischievously.

In way of answer, Megatron accepted it. They *were* good. He ate a few more, but the sweetness turned bitter the more he avoided the subject. The words sat at the tip of his glossa. He had to get them out. Had to bring it up.

"You should have some," Megatron said, instead, when he was offered another.

"I made them for you, though." Rodimus sat up and frowned. "They *are* bad aren't they?" Before Megatron could insist, again, that they *were* delicious, Rodimus ate one, giving a delighted (not to mention *cute*) wiggle when he tasted it. "Nope! They're *great*, if I do say so myself. So, *have another*." He held it out in offering.

"Really, Rodimus, I've had enough." Megatron took the tray from his hand and set it aside.

"You'll finish them later, yeah?" Rodimus said, spoiler flapping happily. He ate the one still grasped between his fingers, making a delighted noise.

Megatron tried to savour the lingering sweetness on his glossa, but the words unsaid continued to taint it. It was now or never. He was only delaying the inevitable. He was only making it worse.

"Rodimus, how much have you thought about this?" Megatron asked.

"About what?" Rodimus' voice took a guarded tone, avoiding Megatron's gaze.

"Us. This. How our relationship will affect the rest of your life."

Rodimus laughed. "Haven't we been over this? I've had many sleepless nights, if you must know. And here we are." He gestured to the room at large, his soft and blissful gaze coming to rest on Megatron's face. "And I'm... sorry about what happened earlier."

"Is that how you're gonna react every time someone has a problem with me?"

Rodimus crossed his arms. "I defend the people I care about."

"Even warlords?"

"That's not who you are anymore."

"That doesn't matter. That is how most people will see me."

"Well, *I* don't see you that way."

"Rodimus." Megatron rested his elbows on his knees and then his mouth against his folded hands. "We are the sum of our experiences. There is no rewriting the past. The war happened. Everything I have done, no matter what the reason, that has happened. Can you look me in the optic and tell me that what I have done now, since I have boarded the *Lost Light*, is greater than four million years of genocide?"

He turned to face Rodimus, who had dropped his gaze to the floor.

"I am not asking you to do that," Megatron clarified. "I know it is impossible."

"How do you expect to move on if you keep clinging to the past?" Rodimus asked, his voice quite choked up.

"There is no 'moving on' for me, Rodimus. Don't you see that?" Megatron turned to him, and he almost held his hands, but stopped himself, balling them into fists to avoid temptation. "I cannot pretend that it never happened, nor can I brush it off as someone would with a small mistake, or even a *huge* mistake. Because it wasn't a mistake. I didn't unintentionally hurt someone or go back on my word, I *killed millions*."

Rodimus stayed silent, but Megatron could see that he was shaking.

"Am I really worth all of this trouble?" Before Rodimus could answer, he continued, "I just need to know that you've thought this over. Believe me when I say that letting you go will be one of the hardest things I've ever had to do, but Rodimus, I am not special. I'm a mech living on borrowed time. With a myriad of criminal charges laid behind me. Things I must atone or otherwise answer to. 'Forever' is neither a guarantee with me, nor is it a possibility. You have to truly think about our potential future, and perhaps even more so, a future where I must leave you. Permanently. This isn't good-bye, Rodimus. It doesn't have to be. But I need to know that you are doing more than just following your spark."

Following shivering ventilations, and a voice shaking like nothing else, Rodimus whispered, "You're not the only one here who's committed genocide."

Rodimus collapsed in on himself; a star on its way to burning out. His vents hitched and he hiccupped as he clung to himself more tightly. Trying to take up as little space as possible.

As gently as he was able with his brutish hands, showing once again how easy it was for him to hurt the ones he cared about, Megatron picked the Rodimus ball up and deposited it in his lap. Only after his arms wrapped around him did Rodimus unfurl, clinging to Megatron like his life depended on it.

"Nyon was not your fault, Rodimus. It was the least cruel choice you could have made. I, on the other hand, have made many cruel choices, and, I will admit, it's hard to live with." Megatron cupped Rodimus' cheek, but didn't force him to turn his helm. He just stroked it with his thumb, doing his best to reassure someone who thought he didn't deserve the care. "You were the one who made me realize that I wasn't ready to die. That to leave nothing but my cruel legacy would have made me the true monster. I doubt that I can ever fully make amends, but I would like to leave this world knowing that Cybertronians have a bright future."

"I want that, too," Rodimus murmured, cautiously looking up at Megatron. "I want to do good, but, I don't think I'm much good at it..."

Megatron gave him a sympathetic smile. "Rodimus... you're far too hard on yourself." He stroked his spoiler, hoping the silence would help these words sink in. These words were true to their very core. Regardless of what happened from here on out, he did hope Rodimus wouldn't let all of his feelings crush him quite so much. "Somehow, you're able to forgive, or at the very least, look past, everything I have done. It amazes me, your capacity to forgive others, when you are so quick to neglect yourself the same treatment. Especially for someone who has done you and so many others harm." He swallowed. "I worry you may have forgotten one of our earlier encounters."

Rodimus hid his face against Megatron's chest. "I remember," he said quietly.

Megatron let out a long sigh, his hand coming to rest where he had hurt the young Prime--Hot Rod,

then. He'd almost snuffed him before he'd had the chance to have a life. "I want to be with you, Rodimus, but I need you to look past your current feelings for me and really *think*. Becoming conjunx with me will have repercussions, and I won't feel comfortable entering such a bond unless I know that you have seriously thought about our past, and what our future may hold."

"Conjux?" Rodimus asked quietly.

"You do understand that that is the outcome of a successful courtship, do you not?" Megatron let off of his embrace a little. Any relationship he had with an Autobot would be under serious scrutiny. At this point, maybe any relationship. And Rodimus, a mech who followed his spark with reckless abandon, would be an easy target for coercion.

Megatron gave another, shorter, sigh, when he saw the beginnings of confusion forming in Rodimus' optics.

They fell into silence. Nigh unbearable for Rodimus, while only bordering on uncomfortable for Megatron. Only the difficult choice before him could tarnish moments of silence with his beloved.

After a while, Rodimus shifted down the couch and lay his helm in Megatron's lap. He should have rejected him then, but he didn't. He just let it happen. He let the harm he would cause fester as he watched this beautiful creature act so comfortable with him. Like he had no reason to fear him. Like he'd never shot a hole through his chest. Like he'd never hurt him. Ever.

"Do you ever think about, like, other universes?" Rodimus mused aloud. "Like, alternate realities? Where things are a little different, but also the same?"

"No."

"Well, *I* do. A lot, as of late."

Megatron stifled a sigh. "It won't help to imagine us in a place where this relationship if without its difficulties."

"No, I mean... okay, I guess I'm doing that, but... lately I've more been thinking about a different way of getting to where we are." Rodimus looked up at the ceiling, raising a hand as if trying to catch imaginary stars only he could see. "Like, maybe there's a Hot Rod out there who joined the Decepticons. I... I wouldn't want to be one now, but I considered it back then. You were going to make some real changes."

"I'm glad you didn't. I would have corrupted you as I did so many lives."

Rodimus scoffed. "I never would've let you."

"You say that now..."

"Nah. You don't just touch someone and change them." Rodimus laughed. "You're powerful, but not *that* powerful."

"No. You're right." Megatron looked into the middle distance. "It takes years of manipulation after getting that bot to *trust* you. You find that it's quite simple when you're seen as the noble leader of a revolution. Bots who are fed up will cling to anything that gives them hope, and most will do anything to see their glorious promised future seen-through."

Rodimus gave a snort of laughter. "Okay, but, no one sees you that way anymore, certainly not me. Not in the same way, anyways. You're gonna do good, and I'm gonna make sure you stick to it."

"You are still viewing me in an overly-positive light." As much as it pained him, he moved away from Rodimus. "My sun--" He bit his glossa. He hadn't meant to use that affectionate term with him. He looked away, correcting himself, "Rodimus. If you were truly looking at me in an unbiased light, you would see that my flaws and short-comings, paired with that I have done to you and to Cybertron, far outweigh any current pros or future promises to do better. I do not know what has you so fixated on me, and I can only hope that it is some infatuation based solely on looks."

There was an uncomfortable silence and then an equally uncomfortable attempt at a laugh from Rodimus. "Now who's being too hard on himself?"

"I think we should hold off on our courtship," Megatron said bluntly, his voice very low and sad. This taste of Rodimus had been more flavourful and filling than any relationship he'd ever been in. He would miss him dearly, even if, and perhaps especially because, he would see him every day.

"What?" Such a small word, and yet it held so much weight.

"I have enjoyed every moment with you, Rodimus," Megatron went on, still refusing to look at him, "but I fear I will get much out of this relationship while you will lose so much more. It's not right of me to consciously accept that, and it was not right of me to let this get as far as it has, but I cannot undo what has been done."

"I've never been happier!" Rodimus yelled, his anger seeming to be on the contrary. "Why do you get to decide how I feel?"

"I'm not."

"Yes you are!"

"No, I am simply making a decision. Only after you've given this some considerable thought will I decide to continue this with you."

"Then look me in the optic while you say it!" Rodimus got off of the couch and put himself right in front of Megatron.

With a pained sigh, Megatron obliged him. He met those fiery blue optics. So full of pain and anger and a myriad of other fleeting emotions. It nearly killed him to watch the mech he loved in such turmoil, but he needed to do this. He wouldn't take the coward's way out. Not for this. Not when it came to Rodimus.

"I don't want you to court me." Each word burned as they left his intake, but out they came, and down Rodimus' spoiler fell. His field exploded with shock, and then pulsed with sorrow that was quickly covered up with a boiling wash of anger.

"You know what? Frag you, Megatron! Frag you for leading me on and acting like you cared about me!" Sparks pricked at Rodimus' optics. Optics that watched a far too-still Megatron. Just sitting there. Taking it. "I don't even care about you!" He barely got that sentence out over the lump forming in his throat. "You haven't changed at all! I don't even know *what* you were trying to get out of this, but you're still a Decepticon! Just... just hurting people!"

The force was all but gone from Rodimus' voice as he watched Megatron stand, feeling even smaller. His shaking frame didn't help the image he was trying to put forward.

"I hate you, Megatron!" The lie burned his throat as it left. His optics stung. "I've hated every moment I've ever been forced to spend with you on this ship! I can't wait until your trial!"

The silence that stretched out between them seemed to last a lifetime. Rodimus felt the crushing weight of regret threatening to topple him. His optics flit around the room until they found the floor between his and Megatron's pedes. He was just about to apologize and beg for forgiveness when Megatron spoke.

"Good." He was barely audible.

"What?" Rodimus tried to sound angry, but he sounded more confused than anything.

"*Good*," he said much more forcefully. When his optics found Rodimus' the light was all but gone from them. The colour, too. Cold and dark. "Hate me. You should. I *have* done nothing but hurt you, and that is all I will continue to do." He started heading for the door.

Rodimus started, reaching out for him, his spark freezing in panic.

"No, wait, please." His words came out feebly. Perhaps Megatron didn't hear them. Or perhaps he did. Whatever the outcome, he wasn't stopping. Without so much as another word or even a glance back, he left. Another failure. Rodimus pressed himself to the door, but soon became too weak to support himself, and he slowly slid down to the floor. "Don't leave me."

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

It's a short chapter, but here it is.

"Leave me alone, Drift," Rodimus said when the door to his room opened. He'd forgotten that he'd given him his door code. Now he was *regretting* telling him his door code.

"I heard you'd locked yourself in your room." Drift crossed the room and sat on the side of Rodimus' berth. "I was worried."

Rodimus pulled his blanket up over his helm. "I said *leave me alone*."

"Megatron's with me," Drift said.

"What?" In spite of himself, Rodimus threw the blanket off of him to find a smiling Drift, and no Megatron. Of course. Fragger. "Not that I care," he added.

"Uh huh." He gave him a sympathetic smile next. "Tell me what happened. It's no secret that you two have--"

"We're *not* together," Rodimus spat. "He made that much *very clear*."

"Oh?"

"Just!" Rodimus practically snarled, hiding under his blanket again. "Just drop it, okay? I don't want to talk about it."

Drift lay down on the berth, resting a hand on the lump that was Rodimus. "Then what do you want to talk about?"

"Nothing. I'd very much like to be *left alone*, if I didn't make it clear."

"Have you fuelled yet?"

"It's not like I'm going anywhere," Rodimus grumbled.

He thought he'd won for a moment when Drift got up, but instead of hearing the door to his room opening, he heard him rummaging through his stores. "Do you need someone to get you some more?" he asked. Mumbling to himself, "There's got to be at least *one* dose in here."

Rodimus groaned. "They're all kind of shoved in the back," he said, resigned. He pulled his covers down off of his face. "You're not gonna leave me alone no matter what I do, are you?"

"Nope."

Rodimus sighed. "And you're not gonna let up until I spill?"

"Well..." Drift finally got his hand on a non-engex bottle. Walking back over, he said, "If you *really* don't want to talk about it, I won't press, but it's not healthy to just bottle things up." At the mention

of bottle, he handed the energon to Rodimus. "It's also not healthy to starve yourself."

"Man, you take all the fun out of self-neglect." He'd meant it as a joke, but Drift frowned a little. To appease him, he drank.

"So." Drift sat next to him. "Are you *sure* you don't want to talk about it?"

Rodimus sighed, then took another swig to delay having to speak. What even was there to say? It all made him sound so pathetic. He *was* pathetic, but he didn't want to *sound* pathetic. Least of all to Drift.

"I heard that you were seen holding hands with Megatron," Drift said. "Just rumours?"

"No, that..." Rodimus sighed again. "That happened. Among other things."

"Oh?"

"I dunno, Drift, we... I was gonna court him and do everything right because, despite *everything* I know about him, I'm really into him and I *hate* that I'm really into him but I *am* so whatever, but... I didn't frag him right away... Do you think that was it? I usually frag everyone right away but they always end up leaving. I thought if I didn't..." Rodimus hugged his knees to his chest. "He probably just pities me."

"I don't think that was it." Drift gave him a sympathetic look.

"Yeah, but like... we were kinda gonna do it and then I stopped? Like I insinuated it was gonna happen, but I really wanted to do this right, so... I thought I shouldn't."

Drift chuckled. "Rodimus, if you saw the way he looks at you, you'd know. He's not just lusting after you."

"Wait, what? What looks?"

"It's whenever you're not looking," Drift said. "I've caught him just *staring* at you more times than I can count. Or should I say, *gazing longingly*." He dramatically fainted onto Rodimus. "My stars, you have a suitor!"

Laughing, Rodimus shoved him off. "Knock it off, Drift." His tone turned somber as his optics dimmed. "I'm not sure I can believe you. He seemed quite adamant in *not* wanting to be with me yesterday."

Drift took a hold of Rodimus' hand and squeezed. "Tell me what happened."

Rodimus groaned. It had all happened just across the room. Barely a day had passed. The wound was still fresh.

"Well... he liked the sweets we made. Thanks, by the way," he offered Drift a quick and grateful look, "for helping. I'm sure if I had made them myself I would have sent him running way sooner." He gave a half-sparked chuckle. The sweet taste of the goodies turned bitter as he recalled sitting there with him. He'd cleared his whole evening just to spend it with him. To just talk. Maybe cuddle. Get to know each other.

So much for that.

"I... guess there was that thing yesterday morning, though..." Rodimus' cheeks burned. "Someone

on the bridge said something about us, so I defended him." He didn't mention the whole getting up on the console thing. "But he didn't want me to? Said I shouldn't."

Drift nodded along, like that was completely reasonable.

"But, shouldn't I?"

Drift looked away.

"You don't think I should?"

"What were you defending?" Drift deflected, his tone wary.

"They said I was 'shacking up with a Decepticon.' But he's *not* a Decepticon. Not anymore."

Drift laughed a little. "Rodimus, you call *me* a Decepticon sometimes."

"Yeah, but like, only as a joke. I don't really mean it." He asked again, "So you really don't think I should defend him? Like *ever*?"

"Not *never*, but... much of what he's done isn't defensible, Rodimus. Or forgivable. Certainly not forgotten, either. Bots are gonna say things like that all the time. If you want to be with him, you're going to have to get used to it."

Rodimus groaned and slid down the berth. "You're supposed to take *my* side," he grumbled.

Chuckling, Drift lay down on the berth, too, resting his helm on his propped up arm. "Hey, if you had decided to date someone who *didn't* start a four million year war, maybe I would."

"Okay, but, like, he still left." Rodimus hugged himself. "Like, it wasn't 'don't do this anymore' it was 'because of this one little thing I now think that we shouldn't be together.'"

"He dumped you over *that*?"

"Well..." Rodimus half-hid his face in his comforter. "I *did* get up on a console and demanded to know who said that." He fully hid it as unrealized embarrassment flooded his systems, compounding on everything else. "I was being stupid."

"Maybe, but... we all make mistakes. That still sounds so trivial." Drift coaxed him back into the light, murmuring, "Want me to kill him? I bet I could do it."

Rodimus snorted with laughter. "*Tempting*, tempting, but, this was kinda my fault, so..."

"Don't be so hard on yourself." Drift hugged Rodimus to him, encouraging him to nestle his helm in the crook of his neck. "And I still might kill him."

"Sulking again, huh?" Ravage jumped up onto the berth beside Megatron. "The Autobots really have made you soft."

"I'm not sulking."

Ravage flicked his tail as he sat down. "Call it what you will. It's not about *Rodimus* is it?" There was a hint of disdain in his voice.

Megatron sighed heavily. "Does the whole ship know?"

"Pretty much."

"Mm. So the damage is done."

"Well that's what happens when you hold hands with *Autobots* in the hallway." Ravage's gaze dropped to Megatron's chest. "Hopefully their influence doesn't reach me, too."

Megatron sighed again, resting his forehelm on his folded hands. Quietly, he said, "I doubt you have to worry about that now."

Ravage cocked his head but said nothing.

"He's the reason I'm here, you know," Megatron confessed. "I was ready to die. But before the trial, he made me realize that I wasn't quite done here. I still had more to give. Not much more, mind you, but more. Just one little conversation, and he completely changed my perspective. He's loud, brash, and *infuriating*, but... he's inspiring, too. I'm humbled by him. He's always thinking of others and what's best for his crew. He truly cares about them."

"What's stopping you, then?"

Megatron shook his helm with a smile. "Don't you see, Ravage? He deserves the world, and I cannot provide it for him. I'm old. I'm weak. I'm out of time. I can't knowingly tie him down to something that cannot possibly last."

"It's not like he's not aware of all that," Ravage pointed out.

"It's so much more than that." He glanced at his friend. "Each time I touch him, I tarnish him that much more. The marks I leave will remain long after I'm gone. They won't see him anymore. They'll just remember that he allowed me to touch him."

"Megatron, if he makes you happy and you make him happy, then who cares what everyone else thinks? Besides, it was disgusting enough to watch you be all moony around him before, I shudder to imagine you moping every time he comes around."

"Because he deserves better. *Much* better."

"Isn't the whole point of this to do better?" Ravage pointed out, flicking his tail crossly.

Megatron paused. "Yes, but not to reap the benefits for the mech I hope to become before I deserve them, and I fear my time is too short to reap what I will hopefully sow. That is another fear of mine. No matter how smoothly this all goes over, I know I am living on borrowed time."

"So, you want to hurt him before you can hurt him," Ravage said flatly.

"If I could I would have rejected him outright," Megatron said. "But I cannot erase even one moment of my past, and this is just another mistake I will have to learn to live with."

"Well, personally, I think you're making a mistake," Ravage jumped down and headed for the door, "but I think you've made a lot of mistakes lately, so maybe this is just the new you."

Chapter 11

"Rodimus, can we talk?"

"No." Rodimus kept his glare forward, crossing his arms.

Megatron glanced around, leaning down over the captain's chair more so that the crew wouldn't hear the desperation in his voice. "Please."

There were a few snickers from the pit, along with one comment. "Looks like Megs is already in the doghouse."

"Ship's fine," Rodimus spat. His spoiler twitched a few times. "Nothing even Ultra Magnus would give two flying fucks about is happening. So what the frag could two co-captains *possibly* have to talk about?"

"*Please*," Megatron insisted, much to the delight of their crew. They weren't even trying to hide their laughter now. "It's important."

"If it's that important, you can tell me here." Rodimus flicked his spoiler, whacking Megatron in the face. He donned a smug smirk then.

"Hmph. Fine."

Megatron headed to their office and stayed there for the duration of their shared shift.

He stayed an hour later, even though there was no work left for him to finish, to ensure that he would definitely avoid Rodimus. If Rodimus would not be civil, then he'd just have to avoid him as best he could. He wouldn't greet him. Wouldn't even acknowledge his presence, if that's what he wanted. His last years aboard this ship would be civil at best, and spark-wrenching at worst.

Perhaps he deserved that.

No. There was no "perhaps" about it. He did. He deserved all of Rodimus' hatred and scorn, and he would take it. If it eased Rodimus through this to yell at him, he would take it. Anything to give him even a modicum of peace.

Rodimus, however, didn't seem to want that space. Megatron's comm rang with his familiar frequency, and he hesitated before answering. He hesitated before speaking, too, but Rodimus took care of that.

"You know what, *Megs*?" His words were slurred and Megatron could hear laughter in the background. "You don't know wah you *gave up*. I. Am. B-e, uh, b-e, frag, I'm *hot stuff*." He joined in with the raucous laughter, probably assuming in his inebriated state that they were laughing with him. "Point is!" He yelled those much louder than the rest of his words. "Yoooouuuuu fragged up *big time*. Best thing that ever happened to you, and you *dumped me*!" Scratch that. *That* was the loudest thing he said yet. "I hope! Your old, flaccid spike," that had someone hollering in the background, "rusts and falls off!"

"Where are you, Rodimus?" Megatron asked as calmly as he was able. He was already headed to *Swerve's*, but he wanted to keep him talking.

Rodimus laughed some more, then swallowed something, presumably more engex. "Oooooooh, Megs... wouldn't you *love* to know?" He hung up, but Megatron was nearing Swerve's anyways.

The background noise on his comm became the background noise to his life as he entered. He noticed the few wary, and even *scared*, looks from some of the patrons, but he kept scanning the bar until he found Rodimus. It wasn't hard. He was sitting on the edge of a table, spilling his huge glass of engex as he gestured.

Upon his approach, Megatron heard him say, "... may be big but his spike it *tiny*. Like, I needed *Perceptor* to see it." He laughed as he took another swig, nearly choking on it. He kept on laughing, though. Riding the high that engex provided him. He only stopped when he finally noticed Megatron, and that was long after all of his companions had. He was basically standing in front of him before he started. "Oh, heeeeeeeey."

Megatron sighed, ignoring the comments and looks from the other bots. "Let's get you home."

Rodimus scoffed before taking another drink. "Right. Like I'm going anywhere with *you*."

"You've had enough."

"Yooooou just don't want me spilling how *laughably* small your spike is." He forced some laughter, to prove his point. To the group at large, he said, "I had to ask him if he'd put it in yet!" Rodimus burst into more drunken laughter, and he got a few awkward chuckles, but nothing like he had over the call. A few of the bots even moved to other parts of the bar.

"I don't care what you tell them, but you have had plenty to drink."

"Frag you." As if to spite him, Rodimus downed what he had left. Even licked his lips.

"Now that that's done, let's get you home," Megatron repeated. He held out his hand in offering, in part hoping Rodimus would crave the affection from him more than he hated him in that moment. He didn't bite.

"I'm not done drinking," Rodimus slurred. He nearly fell off the table as he waved Swerve over, giggling as he righted himself. Swerve pretended not to notice him, casting a wary glance Megatron's way. "Aw, frag..." Rodimus hopped of the table, teetering on his pedes.

"Enough of this. We're leaving." Megatron grabbed his wrist.

"DON'T FUCKING TOUCH ME!"

The whole bar went silent.

Megatron released his wrist and took a step back for good measure.

While all of *Swerve's* watched Megatron, Megatron watched Rodimus. He watched the pain flood his optics. Saw how his spoiler shook. He saw that, even beneath the heavy layer of engex, he hurt to his very core. He saw how much his mere presence reminded him of what he'd lost. No matter how much it benefitted him, he deeply grieved this loss.

He thought about apologizing, but it would be for his own benefit. So he did the only thing that could help Rodimus now. He left. He walked out of that bar, but he didn't head back to his own room. He had another stop to make first.

"Drift." Megatron struggled to meet his gaze. "It's Rodimus."

Drift stood aside as though he'd expected this. "Come in."

"No, that's not it. He's at Swerve's. He's had a lot to drink. I tried to help him, but it's clear he doesn't want my help. Please. Help him home, or take him in for the night." Megatron clenched his fists. "Don't let him destroy himself over me. I'm not worth it."

Drift gave a long-winded sigh. "I hate to watch him turn to engex," he said quietly. Defeated.

"Me, too."

They shared an equally desperate look.

"You really hurt him." Drift's voice took on an edge.

"I know."

Drift looked him over, staring into his optics for an uncomfortably long time. "It's clear you care for him. Why *did* you end things?"

"Please, Drift, I'm afraid he's going to hurt himself. If he hasn't already."

Drift looked beyond him, as though Rodimus were just down the hall. "You have to talk to him. Later. Once he's sober."

"I want to Drift, believe me, but I don't think it will help."

"I still think you should try."

Megatron sighed. "Fine. Just, *help him*. Make sure he's safe."

Drift kept his optics on him as he stepped around him and shut the door behind him. "I will."

"Thank you." Megatron watched Drift walking to the bar, thankful that Rodimus had someone watching out for him when he couldn't. Each moment apart from him, knowing that all the anguish he was going through stemmed from him, ate away at him. Bit by bit his spark shriveled further in his chest. Already weak from so many frame changes, from years of war, from all the hardship.

Perhaps sparkbreak would be his undoing.

Chapter 12

In the dead of night, Megatron's comm woke him up. He groaned as he cracked open tired optics, expecting to see Rodimus' frequency, but surprised to find that Drift was calling him. Surprised, then intensely worried.

"Drift?" he answered. "What is it?"

"It's Rodimus."

Of course it was.

Drift sighed. "I can't get through to him. Can you come? We're in my hab suite. I know you don't want--"

"No, no, I'll come." He accidentally kicked Ravage awake as he stumbled out of bed, and he offered him a quick apology. "He hasn't hurt himself, has he?"

"No. Well... not beyond the drinking." Away from the receiver, Drift said, "There's a bucket beside the berth if you—" He made a slightly disgusted noise. To Megatron, he warned, "It's not pretty."

Megatron squinted as the hall lights cycled on. "Do you know how much he's had? Do we need to call Ratchet?"

"I don't know, and I don't think so. He's bad, but it's not physical. Beyond the purging."

"Right." Megatron swallowed. "I'm sorry, Drift."

"I'm not the one you need to apologize to."

"I know. I'm on my way."

"Hurry." Drift left it at that.

Megatron didn't consider what him running through the corridors late at night might imply. He didn't care. He didn't want to cause a panic, but Rodimus needed him, and *he* was panicking.

He did consider comming Ratchet. Perhaps not to come right away, but just to let him know that they might need him. But he had no desire to deal with a grumpy medic who had his recharge disturbed for *maybe* an emergency. Nor did he want to put an already-suffering Rodimus through any sort of medical examination he didn't need. Or potentially psychological.

He really should talk to someone about this. He should suggest it.

Huffing from the exertion, Megatron knocked a little too loudly on Drift's door. He received a long groan in response, then heard Drift's hushed and gentle voice, though he couldn't make out the exact words.

Maybe half a minute later Drift opened the door. His field pricked worriedly at Megatron's plating. "He's not being very cooperative."

"I've dealt with worse." Megatron stepped around Drift, and twin blue optics cut into his plating like lasers.

"Why'd you bring *him* here?" Rodimus spat venom.

"Mostly because you've been asking for him for about an hour now," Drift gently teased.

Megatron's gaze softened as he looked at Rodimus' pale face and dull optics. He was quick to hide them when he saw Megatron looking, burrowing his face into his pillow and groaning some more. Poor thing.

"Has he really?" Megatron whispered to Drift.

Drift nodded. "He's still a little drunk," he warned.

"I gathered."

With slow, careful steps, Megatron approached the berth. Rodimus' hackles raised the closer he got, his spoiler flicking irritably. He swallowed a few times, too, looking like he might be sick at any moment.

Megatron knelt down by the berth. Not quite optic level, but close.

"Rodimus--"

"Go away," Rodimus said into the pillow.

"Is that really what you want?"

Rodimus said nothing.

"Do you have a helmache?"

"Everything hurts."

"Do you want me to help?" Megatron's hand hovered over Rodimus' neck. "Let me help you." He sounded like he was begging. Maybe he was. Begging to ease Rodimus of his self-inflicted pain. No. He'd been the one to hurt him, really.

After Rodimus shuddered out a few ventilations, he deflated and muttered, "Do what you want."

That was likely the best he was going to get right then.

Megatron slowly and gently massaged his neck cables. He kept his grip rather lax so Rodimus could fight him off if he truly didn't want to be touched, but the little moan he let slip told Megatron it felt good. He increased the pressure in increments until he was really helping to open his fuel lines.

"Has he had any regular energon?" Megatron asked Drift, standing nearby.

"He just keeps purging," Drift said.

Megatron nodded. "Do you feel nauseous, Rodimus?"

He noticed Rodimus' clenched fists then. He'd balled up some of the sheets in his hands until his knuckles creaked. His spoiler rattled against his back plating as though it were going to fly off at any moment. And then nothing. He stilled. He relaxed his hands. Megatron thought he'd fallen into recharge until he spoke.

"I don't want you to take care of me."

"That's too bad," Megatron said. "I can't just watch you suffer."

"Yes you can!" Suddenly Rodimus was up, smacking his hand away. All rage. A fireball. Not literally, though. At least, not yet. "You've been watching me suffer for *days*!"

"Get it all out." Megatron sat back, resigned. "I've got nowhere to be."

Rodimus looked ready to unleash hell upon him, but then his optics grew wide and he quickly grabbed the bucket near the berth. Not much came up. Beyond maybe a swig of engex and some spittle dangling from his lips, Rodimus dry-heaved. Megatron moved to comfort him, but Drift was faster. He rubbed where his spoiler halves met, murmuring comforting words while Rodimus coughed and hacked up nothing.

In the end, Megatron looked away, trying to give him a meager amount of privacy.

Slowly, Rodimus raised his helm and lowered the bucket, panting. Drift dabbed at the corners of his mouth with a rag.

"Go on," Rodimus spat. "Tell me off. Tell me how stupid I am."

Drift softly shushed him and encouraged him to lie back down with gentle pats on his back and spoiler. He went without a fight. It didn't seem like he had much fight left in him, and any he did have was sure to be thrown Megatron's way. He wished he would rest. Save his strength to heal now and yell at him later.

"I have half a processor to permanently activate your FIM chip," Megatron said. "But I hope you're not too far gone."

Rodimus laughed eerily.

"I don't want to," Megatron added, "because it won't help this. It won't make you feel better *now*."

"Yeah, because you being here makes this whole experience *so* much better." Rodimus' sarcasm was lost on Drift tucking him back into berth. His optics fluttered with fatigue as he tried to keep up his glare. "Why are you even here?"

Megatron grunted as he got back onto his knees. He silently watched Rodimus as he tried to stay awake. "Because I still care about you."

Rodimus barked laughter. "Ha. Good one. I, too, leave people I care about."

Megatron let a small sigh slip, giving Drift a glance.

"How do you feel now, Rodimus?" Drift asked gently, resting a hand on his spoiler mount.

Rodimus shrugged.

"Do you think you might purge again?"

Rodimus made a so-so gesture. "Not much left in the tanks."

"Okay. Well, I'm going to deal with this." He picked up the bucket and gave Megatron a hard but knowing look. "I'll be back soon," he both promised and warned.

Megatron kept his gaze on Rodimus while he listened to Drift's retreating pedesteps and then the door as it opened and closed. He inched closer to the berth, resting a hand on the mattress beside

Rodimus. Testing the boundaries. When Rodimus just stared dully at it, he reached for him, and stifled his relieved sigh as Rodimus let him rest his hand on his burning helm.

"I love you, Rodimus," Megatron confessed on a whisper, gently stroking his finials. "It's *because* I love you that I have to let you go. I'm caging you."

Rodimus tried to glare, but his optics softened in spite of himself. Or maybe he was just too tired to keep on hating him. He weakly reached for Megatron's face. With shaking fingers, he stroked his cheek, and Megatron let him do it. He didn't know if it was a good idea. Maybe he should pull away. Maybe he should never have come. But he was here, and he let it happen, and he'd let it slip just how deep his feelings for Rodimus ran. Good idea or bad, he'd done it.

"Maybe I like being caged," Rodimus said.

Megatron dropped his helm, shaking it. When he met Rodimus' optics again, they dimly glowed with love. "Would *you* cage someone you cared for?"

Rodimus shrugged.

"Can you not see how much better your life will be on a whole if I am not in it?" Megatron pressed. "You can be free to find a conjunx who can give you everything I cannot. Someone who can commit to you for the foreseeable future. Someone you do not have to be ashamed to be with. Someone you can be *proud* to call your own. You will have none of that with me."

"I'm happy." Rodimus smiled. "That time I took you to that planet, and that time in the shower after, I'd never been happier. Right now--*this*," he nudged Megatron's still-stroking hand, "makes me happy. *You* make me happy."

"But is it *enough*?"

Rodimus gave a little shrug. "It is right now."

"But how can you live with this—with *me*—knowing that our relationship will be fleeting at best?"

Rodimus' optics dimmed and closed for a moment. He heaved with an enormous sigh before he said, "Some bots never meet someone who they want to be conjunx with. Some meet them when they're young. Some when they're not-so-young. I consider myself lucky to get any time with you. But I can't have *any* of that if you won't be with me because you're so afraid of what everyone else will think of me."

"Rodimus..."

"If you really don't want to be with me..." Rodimus trailed off, his spoiler drooping.

"... you won't loudly badmouth me in a bar?"

"Sorry..." Rodimus buried his face in the pillow. Muffled, he said, "I'll leave you alone if you really don't want me."

Megatron rested his hand on the berth, feeling more like a wretch the longer he watched Rodimus shake. "I really don't deserve you. More than most. All I've done is bring you pain."

"But now you don't," Rodimus argued, turning his helm back so his voice wasn't muffled, but not quite enough to truly face Megatron. "Things change. We grow. We adapt. Decepticons become Autobots. Enemies become friends. Amica. Lovers. Even Conjunx. We live too long to hold onto

grudges."

"So you would sooner love someone who has brought you nothing but strife? Rodimus there are so many other bots, even just on this ship, who have never done you wrong. Some who would jump at the chance if you looked their way." Megatron was so tempted to keep touching him. So tempted, that he could no longer stop himself, and his hand went to his spoiler instead. Long, soothing strokes along the plane of it had Rodimus' optics shutting contentedly. "You will have so many chances for love. I'm sure of it. I am not the be-all end-all."

Rodimus shrugged. "If it's meant to be with someone else, then it will be. Right now, I want *you*."

"But what if your being with me tarnishes your reputation so much that the bot who *would* have been with you wants nothing to do with you anymore?"

Rodimus started laughing before Megatron finished speaking. His cheeks grew even rosier, his slanted smile *intoxicating*. Megatron didn't want to tarnish him. He was content to watch him flourish from the sidelines.

"You think too much," Rodimus said. "All these maybes, these hypotheticals, and you forget that people *already* don't really like me, so... why should I resist what feels so good *now*?"

Megatron made a pained noise. He put his hand on the berth again, but this time it was not alone. Fingers slender than his own brushed and then intertwined, and unlike the first time Rodimus had rested his hand upon Megatron's, he turned it so they were palm-to-palm.

Drift returned. He quietly entered, taking in the scene, then slunk along the walls like a shadow and into his washracks. A moment later Megatron heard the water running.

"I have to think ahead, since you won't." Megatron managed a small smile.

"Heh. Yeah, I'm kinda stupid that way."

"I would argue but that's likely why you've tangled yourself up in my life." He lifted Rodimus' hand to his lips, scrunching up his optics as he kissed his palm, trying to ignore his confliction at the act. He sighed as he watched Rodimus' fingers tremble. "Rodimus. I know the future seems so far away. And it's uncertain. A year? Two years? Who knows how long we will be on this quest."

"But that's why it doesn't matter," Rodimus argued. "Because we *don't* know."

"We know what will *likely* be."

"*Likely*. Not for sure. *Likely*."

Switching the hand he used to hold Rodimus', he resumed his stroking of his helm. He smiled, melting a little as he leaned into the touch. He was practically purring.

"I never wanted to hurt you," Megatron whispered. "I meant to stay away from you. So this would never happen, but I let my guard down, and you caught me. That's on me."

"I'm the one who forced myself on you." Rodimus stopped Megatron's petting. He looked conflicted, as though he thought he didn't deserve the affection, but still craved it. In the end he let him continue, but he said, "It's my fault."

"Let's not argue over where blame should be placed on what has already happened, alright?"

Megatron waited until Rodimus gave a little nod of agreement. "Instead, let's focus on where to go

from here."

Rodimus looked down until his optics looked closed. "Okay."

"I want to know that you'll be okay."

Rodimus nodded. "I know. I will be. Eventually."

"What can I do for now?" He stopped stroking, and it was clear from the way Rodimus curled up a little more that he missed it, but he didn't ask him to start again.

"I dunno."

"I could get you a few days off," Megatron suggested. "As long as you're spending it in your *hab suite*."

Rodimus half-scoffed and half-laughed. "Like I'll get over this in a few days."

"It could still help."

Rodimus shrugged. "Doubt it."

Drift poked his helm out of the washracks, catching Megatron's gaze. He released Rodimus' hand as he came over.

"Well." He stood. "I should get going."

"Please don't leave," Rodimus begged. "Not again. I don't want to face another night alone."

"Drift is here."

"I know, but... I want *you*."

Megatron chuckled. "That much you've made clear."

Rodimus' hands worked up Megatron's arm and forced him to bend down further. "Please."

Megatron raised his gaze to meet Drift's. "It is your room."

Drift crossed his arms. "It'd be a tight fit."

"Please, Drift?" Rodimus' grabbing hands went to Drift.

Drift gently pried them off and held them instead. "I just don't think it's a good idea." To Megatron, he said, "You haven't changed your mind?"

"Not... exactly," Megatron admitted.

"So what was all that then?" Drift shrugged Rodimus off and re-crossed his arms. "You're just going to periodically come in and hold his hand and never let him move on?"

"I was trying to help. You *asked* me to come!"

"And I'm beginning to realize that that was a mistake."

"Drift, please." Rodimus tugged at his arm. "It's okay. I'm okay."

"I should leave," Megatron said.

"Then I'm coming with you."

Before Rodimus could even start to try and leave the berth, both Megatron and Drift stopped him. He pouted a bit. Megatron frowned. Drift sighed.

"*Fine*," Drift said. "He can stay, but no funny business!" He pointed at Megatron.

Megatron sighed, too. "I really don't think this is a good idea." He climbed in beside Rodimus, regardless.

"That makes two of us." Drift shut off the lights and then he climbed in, too.

Rodimus, on the other hand, was all smiles. He seemed conflicted on which way to lay, on who to face, but he decided on Megatron. Drift didn't seem to mind this, at least. He spooned him and nuzzled against him like he'd done this a million times.

Megatron fumbled around. Drift's presence combined with the newness to Rodimus' hands touching his frame compounded on his awkwardness and made him stiff. He would like nothing more than to let himself fall victim to the fingers ghosting over his chest if it weren't for their audience and the confliction still eating away at his spark. He really shouldn't be doing this. This was just like the first night, and just like the first night, he couldn't fight himself. Not really. Not enough.

Eventually he settled. He made sure he was mostly sitting up. Mostly to dissuade Rodimus from trying to kiss him, but also so he could stay awake. He was going to watch over him. Protect him. Do something good for him, for once.

Fatigue quickly claimed Rodimus. His hand slid down Megatron's chest and Megatron moved it so it lay across his lap in a more comfortable looking position.

He stroked his sleeping face, careful not to rouse him. So peaceful. So unlike the roiling mess he'd been hours before. He wanted him to feel how he looked then in his spark. Always. He'd make sure that became a reality.

"I should kill you for what you've done." Drift's optics flicked open from the other side of Rodimus. "Look at him. He's clinging to you. And you dropped him the moment things got difficult."

"He deserves better than me."

"I know."

"Then why did you ask me to come?"

"Because he loves you, and because it's clear you love him, even if you're terrible at showing it." His optics half-shuttered as he looked at his amica. "You really messed him up."

Megatron rested a hand on Rodimus' spoiler mount. "I know. I'm trying to do right by him."

"But he *wants* to be with you."

"It's complicated, Drift. I know you know that this isn't that simple. No matter how much he or I may want the other... some lovers are star-crossed. I can only see this ending in tragedy." Megatron found peace in Rodimus' calm face. He hoped he was dreaming about something nice. Something unrelated to him. Something that made Rodimus happy no matter what happened in his life. "I'm

hurting him now, and I wish I hadn't. I really do. But if a little pain now saves him from a world of pain later, then..."

"You call this 'a little'?"

Megatron fixed Drift with a hard stare. "And what will you have me do once the Knights try and sentence me to death? *Haunt* him?"

"You don't know that will happen."

"Would *you* spare my life?" Megatron waited, but Drift didn't answer. "I'll help him now. *I* think that having me around is a hinder, but... I will be there. It's better that we're both here, rather than leaving it all for you in the future."

"Hm. Well. You don't get to walk out anymore. He was bad enough *before* he got to Swerve's."

Megatron leaned down over a peaceful Rodimus. "I'm sorry I hurt you," he whispered.

"Say that *when he's awake*," Drift said. He nuzzled closer to Rodimus. "You keep saying you don't deserve him, but instead of trying to be the best you can be, you just keep hurting him and then hiding behind that fact. Well, he wants you. You don't have to be with him, if you don't want to. You don't have to be with him even if you *do* want to. But you have to choose. You can't toe the line whenever it's convenient to you. To ease your *own* conscience."

Megatron nodded along.

"After tonight, you're going to make a choice." Drift's tone said that this was *not* a suggestion.

"You want to be with him? Fine. But you *stick with him*. If you don't? You tell him that. He'll survive."

"I will."

"I might still come after you if you break his spark," Drift said, but Megatron caught the flash of his smile. "Just a warning."

Megatron chuckled. "I expected nothing less."

Chapter 13

Megatron woke up first, thankfully. He'd planned to slip away before either of them woke up, but Drift's optics snapped open the moment Megatron moved.

"So you're leaving, then?" he asked quietly, more protectively holding Rodimus.

Megatron finished getting out of berth, but rested his hand near Rodimus'. Not touching, but near. "I have a lot of thinking to do."

"What should I tell him?" Drift's optics dropped to Rodimus for a moment.

Megatron shook his helm. "Nothing. I don't want him to get his hopes up."

Drift sighed as he stroked Rodimus' sleeping face. When his fingers left, Rodimus made a noise, but he didn't online. He just rolled over, facing Drift now, his arm flopping over him. Even in this goofy position he looked cute. Peaceful. Harsh reality would have him soon, and the only mech who could stop it from creeping in was leaving. Megatron felt more deplorable than ever.

"What's it like?" Drift asked as though he was in a trance. And maybe he was, the way he was looking at Rodimus. With such love. Such *adoration*.

"What's what like?"

Drift shook his helm, blinking. "Oh. Nothing. Never mind. You should go. Before he wakes up. And Megatron?"

"Yes?"

"I think you're making a *huge* mistake."

Their interaction sat with Megatron all morning. He finally understood what it was like to be Rodimus, what with all the withering looks Magnus gave him. Was Rodimus always this out of it? So lost in his own thoughts? How many worries could be plaguing him?

A part of him was disappointed to not have a shift with Rodimus for a while. There had been no schedule changes in light of recent events, that was just how it was. And unfortunately for Megatron, after this morning he had a free day and the next shift was in the afternoon. So much time to be alone with his thoughts. To weigh the pros and cons. To ask himself if he deserved to follow through on what made him so *happy*.

Did he *deserve* happiness? That was the real question here. He'd hurt Rodimus already, there was no undoing that, and some part of him still hoped that they'd be together. It really had been a wishy-washy sort of break-up. Not even really a break-up. So, there was a good chance that Rodimus would be hurt again.

Especially after their talk. And the hand holding. The everything.

But did he *deserve* it?

No. No, of course he didn't. He didn't deserve to be alive even *now*. Megatron knew that. So many bots on the ship would be much happier to live in the time where he no longer existed. But...

intentionally or not, Rodimus kept him alive. Even more so, now that Megatron's spark had taken to his particular flame. It burned like nothing else, but he wanted to feel its searing heat dig deep into his frame. Every wire, every strut, down to the smallest diode, would take to it eagerly.

Megatron stayed in this fog until he wound up in his hab suite. He'd barely noticed the day passed, and now he was sat before his desk, a new mound of poetry to his left. *Love* poetry, he'd come to find. He really was out of it. It was all about Rodimus, of course, and though it wasn't exactly *good* it wasn't *bad* either. It was honest.

Some were flowery and whimsical. All butterflies and firsts and a warmth like the first touch of sunlight in the morning. Some were darker. They fed off of Megatron's dread and Rodimus' anger. They made Megatron a little sick to his tank to re-read, but he forced himself to. These were the times where a lesser love would fall apart. Flings and infatuation never held through hard times.

But most, most were fiery. Like Rodimus, they burned with a fierce passion that couldn't be contained. These were the trysts in showers and the confessions on an alien world. A daring kiss placed on foreign lips. A catalyst. One that led to an abruptly ended courtship that was just finding its wings with sweets and trips and a new closeness that both sides were happy to explore. An exploration that could never be if the co-captains didn't agree on its course. Halted in fear of the unknown. In fear of a risk thought too great for a selfish reward.

Megatron placed the last poem on top of the stack with the rest.

Rodimus was the perfect muse. So full of life. So tormented. Using him this way ate away at Megatron even more. It was another benefit he took that gave Rodimus *nothing*.

In a more practical move, Megatron started a list on a blank data pad. A pros and cons list.

He didn't know how long he had been at this, and he didn't care to check his chronometer, but after a while he had a decent list. Then, he scratched out every item that only pertained to his *own* happiness, and he watched with sadness, but not surprise, as the "pros" list shrank while the "cons" list remained remarkably untouched.

Overcome with a sudden tiredness, Megatron retired to his berth, not even bothering to save or shut the data pad off.

Though he was sure he got a good amount of sleep, Megatron felt like hell the next morning. Or rather, afternoon. Which was just as well. He didn't want to spend the morning... well that was the problem. He didn't know how to waste all this time. Not even *poetry* would help. Not with his mind so preoccupied on his forbidden muse.

He trudged to the bridge, both hoping to see and dreading his potential encounter with Rodimus. He couldn't take more of his anger, but he couldn't take anything nearing affection, either.

Hopefully they'd find the Knights soon.

At the opening of the bridge door, blue optics met red. For a brief, wonderful moment, they glimmered with happiness and hope and love and every other wonderful emotion Megatron had seen in them before. All too quickly, they dulled. A grey-blue that would haunt Megatron to his grave.

"Hey," Rodimus still said. His smile was clearly forced, but Megatron made no comment on that. "Give me a second and I'll get you the notes."

Megatron didn't respond since Rodimus turned his back. He pointed at the screen before one of the navigators, telling them he wanted to make a detour to help a species on a planet under a fascist rule. An organic planet. With organic life. A selfless act that Megatron would still think twice about doing. Especially when it potentially put the crew and the ship at risk. But the crew would follow him. The Rod Squad especially.

Well. Whoever the Knights were, Megatron knew there were few worthy of such a title, but Rodimus had earned it. He had doubts any of these Knights were even half as good as he was.

"I'm proud of you," Megatron murmured once Rodimus was in earshot, still somewhat in a trance. He couldn't keep his optics off of Rodimus no matter how hard he tried.

"Oh. Uh. Thanks." With a hint of blush staining his cheeks, Rodimus offered Megatron the data pad. He looked at him only out of the corner of his optic. "Here. Nothing really happened. Supply stop was normal. Just a change of course coming up. I mean, it's all in there."

Their fingers brushed. While their touch was brief, their gazes lingered, holding for much longer than was proper. It was a mixed blessing, to be on the bridge. It was good, though. If they had been in the office—alone—Megatron might not have been able to stop himself. Even now the crazy idea of kissing him right here, right now, crossed his processor. This look, though, was intimate enough to draw the attention of some of the crew. They looked anywhere but at each other.

"So," Rodimus broke the silence, "see you around?"

Megatron nodded.

"Okay." Rodimus dropped his gaze to Megatron's pedes. "Well. Have a good shift."

He gave Megatron a bit of a wide berth as he headed for the exit. Megatron didn't turn. He wouldn't. He'd let him go. It would get easier.

"Rodimus." He turned anyways. Stopped him with his name. He all but bit his glossa off when he saw the hope flare to life in the young Prime. "Take care of yourself," Megatron said flatly, disappointing himself, too.

To his credit, Rodimus smiled a little. "Don't worry. I'm going to Drift's. We've got a whole night of movies planned."

"Good." Megatron nodded. "Have fun, then."

"I'll try." Rodimus left.

Megatron spent most of that shift in the office, mourning the loss of his love. Regretting, too, but that was par for the course.

Chapter 14

Another night came and went fitfully. Megatron only managed a few hours at a time. His dreams came so vividly and so full of life and colour that his subconscious brought him back online and forced his weary fingers to write poem after poem after poem.

When the time to actually wake up came, he awoke with a start and knocked the pile of data pads on his berthside table on top of a slumbering Ravage. He hissed and growled and swatted at them, turning groggy and furious optics up at Megatron.

“Just be conjunx with him already,” he spat, stalking off and flicking his tail irritably.

“I’m sorry, Ravage,” Megatron apologized weakly.

With another growl, Ravage said over his shoulder, “I’m going somewhere I can get *proper* recharge.”

Megatron covered his stinging optics, hunching over on the berth. His frame lagged with every movement, and it felt as though someone had welded twice the armor onto his frame while he slept. Each movement flopped with the weight as he forced himself out of his berth. He would find no more solace there than the rest of the world.

A crack of data pad glass under pede preceded a frustrated growl as he clumsily picked it and its non-broken counterparts off of the floor. He tossed them on the berthside table, and some stayed, but most ended up back where they started.

They weren’t good poems anyways.

And yet. A plethora of jumbled thoughts and feelings hastily written in the dead of night, with no light beyond that of the data pad itself, and still his processor, his spark, would not give him peace. He no longer wrote, he transcribed. Each thought less coherent than the last.

My Sun, his fingers would type. Over and over. Radiant, glowing, warm, hot, *scalding*. His hands should burn to touch him. A sun is to be admired from afar and never looked at directly. Who was he to claim the sun for himself? To steal that light from others so he may enjoy it alone? Who give him the *right*?

And yet.

Megatron growled in frustration and swung at what remained of the stack, knocking it back onto the floor. He broke a few more, ridding the world of more of his selfish work. Ridding himself of re-reading the mess and diving helm-first back into emotion.

The warmth of his palms on his plating still haunted him. The scrape of his fingertips as he kissed his neck and had him arching in his grasp and—

Megatron snatched his helmet off and roughly clawed at his crest. He hissed with pain and reveled in it, and for one brief, horrible moment, he related to Rodimus far too much.

This had to stop.

His crest still throbbing, Megatron pulled up Drift’s frequency. He picked up after a few rings.

::What do you want?: he said harshly.

::Is Rodimus there?: Megatron asked.

::He just left. Sorry to disappoint.::

::No, I... I wanted to speak with you, if I may. Privately.::

Drift said nothing for a while.

::You know where my habsuite is.:: He hung up.

Standing before Drift's open door, Megatron nodded at him, and received a nod in reply. A nod, and then he stepped aside, his barely contained field crackling around him.

"How is he?" Megatron asked.

Drift gave him a scathing look. "How do you think?"

"I could apologize, Drift, but I know it would change nothing. And I refuse to apologize for what we had." The light of his optics dimmed. "I could apologize for hurting him again, but it would be white noise."

Drift's gaze turned sympathetic. "I haven't heard you talk like this for a while. He's really under your plating, isn't he?"

Megatron sighed. His restless night caught up with him.

Nodding towards the couch, Drift said, "Sit."

So, he sat. He sat where he imagined Drift and Rodimus had while he comforted him in his sparkbreak. A spark he wished to mend if only he could.

"I don't mean to be so undecided. You must understand that the last thing I want is to see Rodimus hurt. I'm fighting my nature. As a Decepticon, we took what we wanted. We *had* to. It was the only way we could survive in the world. You, of all mechs, should know this."

Drift stayed silent.

"I haven't wanted anyone the way I want him. I know I don't have much of a future ahead of me, but whatever I *do* have, I know I want to see it by his side."

"But that isn't fair to him." Drift said this like a statement, not an accusation of careless thinking. He nodded, sighing lightly. "I know how difficult this is. For the both of you. That doesn't change the fact that you *need* to make a decision. If he holds onto this hope for too long it'll crush him. He's already so hurt. You *have* to be gentle with him."

Megatron growled in frustration. "I *know*."

"Okay, so, what, do you want me to weigh the pros and cons with you? Give you my blessing? Because you're not going to get that. I'll stand by whatever decision you make but I'm not going to tell you that you should be with him."

"So you don't think I should."

“I’m not saying that.”

“Then you do?”

“I’m not making this decision for you.”

“If you were me, then,” Megatron ventured. “What would you do?”

Drift frowned. “I never would have gotten involved with him in the first place.”

Megatron sighed, his helm falling.

“If you wanted someone to sugar coat it you shouldn’t have come to me.” Drift narrowed his optics. “Why did you come to me, anyways?”

Meeting Drift’s gaze, Megatron said, “You intimately understand the complications of redemption. And... I think you understand how I feel about Rodimus, as well.”

Drift’s cheeks and finials turned an angry red. “What does that mean?”

“It means you want to see him happy as much as I do. No matter what it means for yourself.”

Drift huffed out an angry exvent. Then, slowly, his shoulders lowered and the embarrassed blush faded to a gentle rosy colour. “Nothing I do can make him happy. He’s made that very clear.”

“You helped him in his time of need.”

“Which only ended because of *you*,” he pointed out bitterly.

“You were there for him. I imagine that night would have been much worse without your presence. He relies on you. And I’m sure he appreciates having you around.”

Drift said nothing.

“I appreciate that you are there for him,” Megatron said. “I feel much better knowing he doesn’t have to be alone in his habsuite. I worry what will happen...” His shoulders fell with his defeated sigh. “What will he do when I’m gone?”

“He’ll manage.”

“Will he? I know you’ve seen the marks on his frame.”

Drift grit fanged denta to stop his lip from quivering. “I’m not an idiot.”

“Then you’ve noticed the fresh marks.” Megatron’s accusatory tone fell away to worry. “Not to mention the drinking. He’s reckless. *Impulsive*. Grief is a powerful thing.”

“Don’t you think I know that?” Drift suddenly exploded, standing. “I’ve known him *way* longer than you have! Just because you have his spark doesn’t mean you know him better! It doesn’t mean you know what’s best for him!” His words bordered on snarls and his hands strayed near his empty scabbards. Though his optics shone blue, the same fire and fury of Deadlock simmered just below the surface.

Megatron watched him levelly. “I don’t presume to know him better,” he said. “That’s why I’m here. To do right by him and by you.”

Drift took a half-step back, turning his face away and ventilating deeply. His chest rose and fell as his fists slowly unclenched.

“Drift. I just have to know that you’ll watch over him. That you won’t let his impulsiveness get the best of him. I said I wouldn’t harm another living creature and I meant that. Even passively. And yet... I have harmed him. I shouldn’t have let myself enter his orbit, but I did.” Megatron put his helm in his hands. “I don’t know what to do.”

Megatron heard Drift sit, but he didn’t look at him.

“Well. I stand by what I said.”

Megatron sighed for what felt like the millionth time that day. Frustration and anger found him as easily as always, but his violence had no outlet. The feelings sat with him. They ate away at him. Only one mech’s touch could draw them all away. One smile could cleanse him for eternity.

“He is something,” Drift said quietly.

“Heh. That’s putting it mildly.”

They endured a rather uncomfortable silence. A very necessary silence.

“And Drift?” Megatron made sure he was looking his way before he continued. “If I do choose to pursue him, and I’m not saying I am, but *if* I do. When my time runs out, you will see to his happiness? You’ll take care of him.”

Drift shifted in his chair, ventilating in slowly, then exventing a sigh. “Of course. Though I will never be able to replace you. I’ll never be enough.”

Megatron folded his hands and bowed his helm. “I wish it was you,” he admitted. “Or else I wish I had had better willpower.”

“We can’t change the past,” Drift said. “And we wouldn’t be who we are today if we hadn’t been the mech we were yesterday. All we can do is try and be better. And Rodimus...” He shook his helm with a smile. Wonder and adoration bloomed to life in dull optics. “He betters people. Every life he touches, he sees our worth. The worth others choose to ignore. He humbles me.”

“Me, as well,” Megatron agreed. He sighed heavily, despite the warmth Rodimus brought even in his absence. He removed his helmet without a second thought, carefully running his fingers through his over-charged crest. Sparks pricked at his hand.

He felt Drift’s optics on him. “That’s a sight I haven’t seen in a while.”

Megatron gave him a glance.

“Have you let Rodimus...?” Drift let the question hang.

Megatron shook his helm. “I’m sure he will, though.”

“He can be surprisingly gentle. He’s careful when he cares.”

Feeling a little lighter and calmer, and rid of most of the built-up charge, Megatron put his helmet back on. “I never doubted him. We simply haven’t had the time to get acquainted to each other’s frames.”

Drift made a disgusted noise.

“I do care about him, Drift,” Megatron said.

“... I know.”

Chapter 15

Rodimus shifted restlessly on Drift's couch. Every new movement made Drift stiffen with annoyance, until he couldn't take anymore.

"What's on your processor?" Drift asked kindly, though his posture said otherwise.

"Nothing we haven't talked to death." Rodimus sighed. "I just can't stop thinking about him."

"I know the feeling." Drift's voice faded dreamily.

"What?"

Drift shook his helm. "Nothing." He patted his lap. "Lie down. A nice helm massage might take your mind off of it?"

Rodimus sighed again. "Maybe. God, this is so *stupid*." He flopped down, momentarily forgetting his anger as deft fingers stroked his finials familiarly. "I want to hate him. I *should* hate him. Why don't I hate him?"

Drift shrugged.

"I wish I could just court you."

Drift's hands stopped for a moment.

"It'd be so much easier to fall in love with my best friend," Rodimus said. "None of this fumbling around and wondering what the other feels. Just... just this, but like, with more kissing and fragging."

"Yeah," Drift agreed. "You'd think."

"You okay?"

"What?" Drift returned from his thousand-yard stare. "Yeah. Yeah, I'm fine." He pressed more firmly at Rodimus' helm. "Good?"

Like an idiot, Rodimus nodded, dislodging Drift's hand. Then he laughed, and Drift laughed too. "Sorry."

Drift kept at it, smiling a little. "It will get better, you know."

Rodimus let out a long-winded sigh. "Yeah. I know. It's just, it's all so far off y'know?"

Drift nodded. "Yeah."

"Guess I should be glad he's probably gonna..." Rodimus shut his optics. "Wow. That was a terrible thought."

"No, it's... a lot of people want him dead already."

"Not exactly making me feel better here, Drift."

"You wanna watch something else?" Drift suggested, trying to change the subject. "Something

really dumb. Like... frag, what was that movie called? The, like, the weird human fragging one?"

"What?" Rodimus laughed.

"The! It, urgh," in a weird voice, he said, "I did not hit her! I did naaaht..."

"Oh, hi Mark!" Rodimus finished for him, laughing heartily now. "Ah, *The Room*. Truly a cinematic masterpiece."

"Yeah, that one! Wanna watch that?"

Rodimus sighed dramatically. "Nah... not sure I can get into that kind of thing right now."

"Anything in particular you *do* want to do?" Drift asked gently.

Another sigh. "No."

"How about—" Drift's comm beeped. He looked shocked for a moment and then smiled. "Sorry, Rodimus. I have to take this." He gently put Rodimus aside and headed to the washracks.

"I swear to Primus, if you abandon me for a booty call, I'm—"

"Don't worry. It's not that. Just something I have to take care of, okay? I'll be right back. I promise."

Rodimus rolled onto his front and groaned overdramatically as Drift closed his washracks door behind him. He stopped a moment later, turning his helm to try and watch the show again, but he just couldn't get into it. Either his processor was too full of Megatron or the show was too boring. Or both. Probably both. He used to like this show so much, though...

Sighing, he threw his arm over his helm and shut his optics. He tried to think of anything—*anything*—beyond Megatron, but he was always three steps away. His stupid processor could turn a rusted bumper into his smile. His beautiful smile. So rarely seen, but always appreciated.

"Driiiiiift," Rodimus moaned. "Come back and entertain me!"

He hadn't expected it to work, but Drift did, indeed, come back.

"Hey, how about we go to *Swerve's*?" he suggested, donning a huge grin.

"Uh... You think that's a good idea?"

"Oh, yeah. No engex for either of us. Just some ridiculously expensive virgin slag with more sweetener in it than we need." He offered Rodimus his hand to help him up. "Whataya say? We'll just hang out and laugh at all the drunk people."

"I don't know..." Rodimus still accepted Drift's hand, though he wasn't quick to let him pull him towards the door. "I'm not sure I should be going to a bar."

"I'll keep you in line," Drift promised. "And it's on me. That sweeten the deal?"

Rodimus grinned. "Then, what are we waiting for?"

Drift held the door open for Rodimus, and he got two steps into the bar when all the lights suddenly shut off.

“What the frag?”

The door shut behind him.

“Drift?” He turned, groping in the dark for the handle, when a soft light started up behind him. He turned cautiously, then started walking towards it, transfixed, when he saw Megatron’s face illuminated by the candle in his hand. “Megatron? What’s—”

Rodimus covered his audials at the sudden burst of string music from the counter.

“Sorry! Sorry.” Swerve quickly turned the volume down and then ducked down behind the bar. “I’m not heeeere,” he said like a ghost.

“What’s?” Rodimus pulled his arms against his frame, his fists resting on his chest. “What’s going on?”

A few more candles found flame. Some around the room, as Swerve made his ghostly moves at the peripheries, while others were clustered on a table just beside Megatron. Soon the room was lit with a dim glow that centered on the mech that made Rodimus’ spark race. Even now, with so little hope left, it still managed to find kindling. A flame that would burn out quickly if not given proper fuel.

Rodimus swallowed as he watched this unfold. He didn’t say a word. Too afraid to spoil the moment. If this *was* a moment.

“Rodimus of Nyon,” Megatron said once the last candle was lit. He made his way over, taking careful but long strides. He smiled timidly as he approached. Before Rodimus, he got down on one knee, holding out a hand toward him. He didn’t grab or force him. He waited patiently until a careful yellow hand slipped perfectly inside of his own. Then he held on. Not a crushing grip, but one not so easily escapable. A grip he could count on.

“Rodimus of Nyon,” he repeated. “Will you do this idiotic mech the great honour of giving him a second chance? One where I will court *you*, as I always should have. It is I who needs to prove that I deserve *you*, and not the other way around.”

The soft, romantic music kept playing, and beyond that Rodimus heard Swerve suck in and hold a ventilation in anticipation, but none of it registered. His processor had turned to static. The already dark corners desaturated further as all of his senses focused on the display before him. A display so romantic, so perfect, and so unlike how Megatron had been acting as of late, that this could only be a dream.

But the hand holding his... it was Megatron’s. A carefully restrained strength waited in that rough palm. It was not a lover’s hand, but a fighter-turned-lover only by his wicked imagination.

“Do I dare indulge?” Rodimus asked dreamily.

“I’m sorry?” The words came gently. So unlike Megatron.

“How long do you think we have?” Rodimus questioned his dream further.

“Well, I...” Megatron’s optics clouded with confusion. “Neither of us have work in the morning, if that’s what you mean.”

Rodimus smiled. A pitying smile. “I’m going to wake up soon. I know it.”

“Rodimus...” Megatron stood slowly, making a few old-mech noises as his joints protested. “This is real.” He abandoned the candle on a nearby table and brought his hand up to stroke Rodimus’ cheek. He thought better of it and stopped just short.

“You can do it, if you want,” Rodimus encouraged. “It’s going to hurt no matter what.”

Megatron’s gaze darkened while the edge of his field pricked at Rodimus’ plating with concern. “I’m here. I want this. I want *you*. Or rather, I want the chance to deserve you.”

“Kiss me, then.”

“What?”

“The dreams always end before we get to kiss, so...” Rodimus swallowed. “As much as I wanna stay here, it just makes seeing you hurt even more. We might as well get it—”

Megatron’s lips met his and sent a pleasant tingle down his spinal strut. It pooled and fizzled with more life where Megatron’s hands found his back and spoiler. He waited with baited breath for reality to steal him away once more. He moved on Megatron with as much passion as he could ignite in his broken frame, knowing that any moment now it would all be stolen away. After what felt like a blissful eternity shoved into one tense but wonderful moment, Megatron pulled away, but Rodimus pulled him right back.

His lips, his shoulders, his hands resting on his waist—they all felt so *real*. But he kept his optics shut tight. His overactive imagination could be turning his pillows and blanket into something they weren’t. Something magical. Too magical, too perfect, to ever be real.

He let Megatron go the next time he broke their kiss. He waited with a pained look on his face, bracing himself for the knife to his chest that always came after this. He waited and waited, staring into those ruby red optics and knowing that every second more he spent here would mean another minute of agony when it was snatched away.

Only it stayed. It stayed even as Megatron smiled at him. Even as he stroked his cheek and looked at him in a way Rodimus had never seen in the waking world. He felt the faint wisps of hope surround his spark as he put his hand over Megatron’s and leaned into the touch.

“This isn’t a dream,” Megatron murmured. “I’m not going anywhere.”

“God, I hope not,” Rodimus whispered. “Waking up from this might kill me.”

His optics dimmed as he glanced at the ground. He let out a small sigh as he lowered his forehelm to Rodimus’. “I’m so sorry I hurt you, my Sun. And my Sun you will be, regardless of how big or small you allow my orbit to be.”

Rodimus wrapped his arms around Megatron’s waist. His hands still shook. Just a little. Fear of this ending still plagued his processor. Would he ever be able to trust this “reality” when it had been taken from him so easily? So *suddenly*? They walked the knife’s edge. If they failed to take careful steps, they could be damaged irreparably.

“This is how close I want you to be,” Rodimus whispered. He still feared if he spoke loudly enough his subconscious would hear. It would hear, and it would take. Or else feed into the fantasy so it may make his chest ache that much more when his spark was so cruelly ripped out.

When Megatron hugged him more surely, he continued despite his racing spark. “But... what’s changed? Who’s to say you won’t up and leave me tomorrow? The next day? I’m gonna do something stupid and you’re going to come to your senses and I’m just gonna be alone again and—”

Rodimus’ optics fluttered closed in surprise as Megatron silenced him with a kiss. And he held him so tight. His lips were so gentle. His hand cupped his helm and when he deepened the kiss, pulling him closer, Rodimus found his frame settling with ease.

This was real.

“You want to know what’s changed?” Megatron’s voice soothed him. How a voice that had barked orders for millennia could ever sound so smooth as it found his audials would forever be a mystery that Rodimus didn’t want to solve. “Because I’ll tell you. Nothing. Nothing has changed.”

Rodimus stiffened.

“I want you as much as I did on that first night. Longer than that. I can’t pinpoint exactly when you wormed your way into my spark, but you’re there. And it’s much easier to let you in than it is to shut you out.

“You’re *infuriating*,” Megatron continued. “You’re reckless. Rash. You endanger yourself and the crew.”

“Geez, I thought you were supposed to be winning me back.”

“But you’re also kind. Caring.” Megatron stroked down his jaw with the back of his index finger. “You don’t endanger anyone for the fun of it. You do so because you believe it’s for our collective benefit. You don’t fight because you want to, you fight to see a better tomorrow once the weapons have fallen. You sulk, but it’s because you wish you could be a better leader.” He lifts Rodimus’ chin as it falls. “And you are. You’re better than I am on every count. It’s *because* you care that you haven’t tread down the path I followed. The path that I am finding again, thanks to your guidance. It’s your willingness to see your faults, even if you may hide them beneath this boisterous exterior to the outside world, that you will *always* be a better leader. You are always learning and have never seen yourself as ‘great.’ In some ways, it is your downfall, but there is no downside to constant growth. And with you as my Sun, my life-giver, I know I will experience my own growth, in time.

“Rodimus of Nyon...” Megatron’s optics bounced between both of Rodimus’, unable to focus. “I love you.”

“You?” Rodimus only managed the one word. He considered smacking his helm to clear out whatever was making his audial receptors malfunction. Or else he’d imagined his lips forming the words and hearing them tumble out in that deep, mesmerizing voice of his.

“I?” Megatron raised an amused optic ridge.

“You don’t think that’s... foolish?” He wanted to smack himself again. This time for sounding so stupid.

“I am a fool,” Megatron admitted. “But I am a fool in love, and I’ve heard that counts for something.” He smiled, and Rodimus couldn’t help but smile back.

“I’ve decided to take a page out of your book,” Megatron went on. “To live more in the moment. To worry less about how I am going to get to where I want to go. After all, I never saw you coming.”

“Really? I was kind of in your face every day.”

Megatron chuckled. “And how glad I am that you were.”

“Does that mean I should bicker with you more often?”

Megatron touched his forehead to Rodimus’. “I think we’ll find enough to bicker about without you purposefully instigating arguments.”

Rodimus smiled but was happy to stop when Megatron kissed him again. It was all so perfect.

“A spontaneous Megatron, huh? He sounds kind of hot.” And as soon as he said it, he regretted it. Like he’s just spoiled this perfect, romantic moment. Though, he’s never had much luck with it. Romance. Infatuation, love... they were fleeting feelings. Borne of a moment of adoration that could swell into something more. Something greater than oneself. But it never lasted. As much as he craved it, he knew he could never have it. It either ended before things got too serious or it lived long enough to turn into some nasty, vile words spit from the same mouths that once whispered sweet nothings.

Now lust, lust was easy. Its source was traceable and could be dealt with easily enough. Even on his own, if need be. Not that this was lust. Or love. Or maybe it was. Rodimus got way in over his helm before he ever realized that his spark stopped racing from hatred and jealousy, but from a different source. A softer one. A side of himself he’d pushed down until it couldn’t speak, and yet it always came back. In a smile, in the strangely kind glimmer of red optics, in the occasional brush of their fingertips that lingered like nothing else. All too late Rodimus found himself in *Swerve*’s on that fateful night. He’d started himself on the long winding road that lead to the exact same place, where Megatron held him. It all ended here. As if to seal the deal and block off every wrong turn they made on their journey, Megatron leaned down to kiss him.

His kiss stopped everything. Rodimus felt frozen, yet as warm as he could be. The music and the candlelit bar all seemed like a distant memory. His present consisted of course lips that kissed so gently and sent a tingle through his whole frame.

He loved how it lingered even as Megatron pulled away. It was like he could kiss him into having a good day. If the weight of the world was on his shoulders, he would help him handle his burden. If he faltered, if he thought he weren’t fit for leadership, he would remind him of his most impressive qualities. If he for even one *second* doubted himself, he would see him through it, and see him come out a better mech on the other side. That was how his love made him feel.

“This is probably the dumbest thing we’ll ever do,” Rodimus said, but he said it with a smile.

“We’re doomed.”

The smile Megatron returned tinged his optics with sadness. “I’d much rather face oblivion with you by my side.”

Rodimus pulled him down for another kiss. He worried that if he talked too much he’d talk Megatron out of his decision. And maybe he should. Maybe he’d been right all along and this would only bring him pain in the end. But he wanted to be like him. He wanted to be spontaneous, and the Rodimus of right now wanted to kiss him.

Megatron hummed along to the music, clearly familiar with it. He started them in a slow dance. More like just swaying, really. At least to start. As the strings picked up, so did their dance, and Megatron guided him through it, still humming along.

Rodimus didn't know what it was. He also didn't care. Megatron's arms were around him. Leading him. Twirling him around *Swerve's* until he forgot where he was. He forgot everything. Their audience, why they had been kept apart for so long. He doubted he'd be able to recall his name if he was asked. All that was clear, all that he could see, was a smile on a familiar face that reached all the way up to gleaming ruby optics.

"I love you," Rodimus whispered, mesmerized. He hadn't said it aloud until now. He'd thought it, certainly, but saying it out loud was completely different. He was glad to have said it, though.

Their dance paused. The music played on, regardless, but it faded while Rodimus' sense of touch heightened to feel the brush of Megatron's fingers as he cupped his helm.

"I love you, Rodimus."

Tilting his chin up, and then with Rodimus tilting it further and stretching up onto the fore of his pedes, Megatron met him halfway in a blissful kiss. Rodimus held firm, afraid that if he let up he would lose him. He hoped this feeling would fade. He wanted to be comfortable around him.

"Stay with me tonight?" Rodimus asked. Pleaded, really.

"I can't stay away from you anymore," Megatron whispered, resting his forehelm on Rodimus'. "I will be with you, Rodimus. Always."

"Don't make promises you can't keep," Rodimus inappropriately joked. "But thanks. For the sentiment."

Megatron shook his helm. "It is a promise I can keep."

He got to his knees, and Rodimus couldn't help but glance at *Swerve's* hiding place as his face turned a deep crimson. He'd never imagined Megatron would be so... voyeuristic. In the end, all he did was kiss his chest, underneath which his spark tried to beat out of its casing.

"I will be with you in your spark. All you have to do is come looking for me."

Rodimus covered his mouth, so overcome with... with *everything*. A plethora of emotions rushed his helm and spark until they ached with feeling. He stooped down to kiss Megatron; his only conduit for this *passion*.

"Megatron? I..." Rodimus bit one of his knuckles while Megatron got to his pedes. His voice came timidly as he spoke. "I think I'm ready to, um... finish our date."

"Oh. Well, I had a bit more planned, but—"

"No! I-I mean, I was thinking more, like..." He glanced at the bar again. "...a change of location? Like, I'm happy to spend any time with you, of course, but we have the night off and the morning and I just thought that we could do a, uh, *thing* and that it would be—"

Megatron shut him up with a kiss. Primus, what a nice way to be shut up. He'd ramble on forever if it meant Megatron would keep shutting him up.

"We can do whatever you'd like, my Sun," Megatron whispered, a hairsbreadth from his lips. Slipping an arm around Rodimus' waist, he announced to the "empty" bar, "Thank you for all your help, *Swerve*."

A thumbs-up over the counter was his only answer.

Rodimus beamed before shock overtook his face as Megatron scooped him up into his arms. “What are you doing?” he asked, a little panicked as he gripped his shoulders tight. Megatron just chuckled as he nudged the door open with his hip. “But what if someone sees?”

“Not to worry,” Megatron murmured. “Swerve knows, which means by now the ship knows. And I’m not ashamed to be seen with you. Unless, of course, *you* are worried by others seeing.”

Rodimus shook his helm before Megatron finished speaking. “No, it’s... it’s nice, actually.” He settled more comfortably against him, letting his hands come to rest on his chest. He even closed his optics. “I just love being close to you.”

Megatron hummed with agreement.

Soon enough they arrived at Rodimus’ habsuite. Together again, and this time Rodimus was going to keep it that way.

His spark pounded in his chest as Megatron carried him in and to the berth, not even bothering to turn on the lights. He lay him gently down on the berth and it creaked as Megatron joined him, his weight pressing him deeper into the plushness.

Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

Well! Here it finally is. I admit I've been sitting on this chapter for a long time. I kept changing things, tweaking things, adding things. I had this perfect scene in my head and I felt like I couldn't get it down. This chapter is what I wrote the entire fic for. If I'm honest, I'm still not too happy with it but if I keep waiting for perfection it will never get done.

I hope you all loved this (long) ride and that it was worth the wait.

Without the lights, they found each other by optic and biolight. Briefly lights would extinguish, or seem to, as a hand passed over them. Particularly the red stripes on Rodimus' waist. Megatron couldn't seem to keep his hands off of them. And when they closed their optics to revel in another kiss, to the world it would seem as if they vanished altogether.

"How did you want to go about this?" Megatron asked quietly.

"How did—? I, I don't know... you? Don't you want to spike me?"

Megatron's gaze softened. "If that's what you want."

"What I *want*?"

Megatron smiled a little cheekily. "What is it that you want?"

"Y-you."

Megatron trailed his lips up his neck and jaw. His ventilations ghosted over his plating and made Rodimus shiver. "I want to make this night everything that you want it to be. But I can't read your mind."

Rodimus shuddered out a ventilation. His frame felt light and he quivered at every caress. But eventually he stopped, watching Rodimus, waiting for him to answer the question hanging in the steam rising from their frames.

"Well, I'm still, uh, sore..." Rodimus' face flushed hot as he admitted this. "I was too rough on myself, so..."

Megatron rolled off of Rodimus, but he didn't go far. Much of his frame still touched Rodimus'. His hand rested on his abdomen, not far above his array. "Was this about me?" he guessed, infuriatingly perceptive.

Rodimus nodded. He didn't think he could say it out loud.

A kiss to Rodimus' forehead made it seem as if the ache would dull to nothingness, but life wasn't a perfect movie with magic healing kisses. Here they had to live with the consequences.

"I was trying to get used to you," Rodimus somehow managed to say. He forced a chuckle when

Megatron looked at him. “Didn’t work.”

“Did you think I wouldn’t warm you up?” Megatron murmured, a little offended. “I don’t want to hurt you. And I am happy to do this in whatever way you’re comfortable with. My preference has and always will be whatever my partner wants.”

“I... *do* like to spike.” Rodimus swallowed. “But you’re so much bigger than me.” He turned his head to the side to avoid his gaze. “I won’t be enough.”

“I’m sure you’ll be plenty for me.”

Even with his reassuring words and the veil of further reassurance surrounding him, Rodimus still worried. Megatron bared his field to him like he’d never felt. He could feel the same chaotic mix of worry and lust and nervousness and *love*, but he couldn’t bring himself to believe that he would be okay with this.

“I’m not here for an overload,” Megatron murmured. “I’m not here to interface. Not on its own, anyways. I’m here for *you*. If being with you involves interfacing, then that’s just a bonus. I just want to spend time with you in whatever way will make you happiest.” He kissed his neck, meaning it to be rather chaste but it transformed into something less-chaste and brought a gasp to Rodimus lips. Still buried in lines coursing with hot energon, with his voice taking on a primal tone as he said, “But make no mistake, I want you.”

Rodimus wrapped his legs around Megatron’s waist and ground their arrays together. He cursed his past self for being so stupid, and had to force the mantra of self-hate to quiet down so it wouldn’t ruin this near-perfect moment.

“I want to see you,” Megatron confessed. He lifted himself off of Rodimus, and he could just see the smile he donned from the red glow of his optics. “I thought this would be more romantic, but I want to see you in ecstasy.”

Rodimus swallowed.

“I wish I had taken some candles with me,” Megatron said. “I wanted to give you your perfect scene.”

“It doesn’t matter to me,” Rodimus lied.

“Next time,” Megatron promised. “Every moment with you is as special as the last.”

Rodimus held still after Megatron left him with a quick kiss to turn the lights on. He shivered as cold air found his plating, misty with condensation. The lights felt as harsh and cold as the air after their warm embrace of darkness. Rodimus felt exposed, and his array was still shut tight. What if the light showed him something Megatron didn’t want to see?

“There you are,” Megatron murmured as he returned to berth. Though he still squinted from the brightness, he said, “Yes, I think I prefer this.”

Rodimus bit his lip.

Megatron caught his worried gaze. “I can turn them back off.”

“I mean...” Rodimus took a deep ventilation and shuddered it out. “You’re gonna see *everything*.”

Megatron chuckled. “That’s kind of the point.”

Rodimus bit his lip harder. He'd draw energon if he wasn't careful.

"You don't have to be self-conscious around me, my Sun. You are gorgeous, effervescent, and delightfully responsive. I only wish I had more optics to watch your every move."

Of all the stupid things for his processor to do right then, it decided to make him *laugh*. The image of Megatron with optics everywhere made for a disturbingly comical sight. And he couldn't stop. His sides ached from laughing and he curled in on himself as it consumed him and for a few moments his anxieties were laughed out of his system.

He froze when a hand gently brushed his cheek.

"My spirited Rodimus," Megatron murmured. "I couldn't keep myself away from you. I couldn't distance myself no matter how many benefits lay in your favour. And you have it in your processor that the size of your spike would change this? That some perceived flaw would send me running? That it could stop this magnetic pull? This one, insignificant detail that is as you as your laughter. As you as your expressive spoiler. As you as your flames, your spark, your very *soul*, and you think that would be the thing to send me running?"

"Well... I..." Rodimus shrank under his gaze.

Megatron coaxed him back out with soothing strokes to his finials. "If you're not ready, you're not ready. We don't have to do this."

"But I *want* to," Rodimus all but whined.

Megatron chuckled. "Well, then, you're going to have to show me this, apparently, underwhelming spike of yours." He smiled lewdly. "Or I could spend the evening with my helm between your thighs."

Rodimus turned a bright red and covered his face, rubbing his thighs together.

"Would you like that?" Megatron asked, his voice low as his hand stroked south.

Rodimus nodded and then shook his helm. "Don't get me wrong that sounds *amazing* and I would be down, but, um... not tonight?"

"As I said, Rodimus, whatever you'd like."

Letting his gaze caress down Megatron's frame, much like Megatron had been doing with his hands since they'd got here, he stopped just short of his array. Even the peripheral glimpse of his spike housing had him biting his lip even as his valve throbbed painfully. His own housing slid aside without warning, and the sudden noise drew Megatron's attention to his erect spike.

"You didn't seriously believe that this wasn't enough, did you?" Megatron eased Rodimus onto his back. He gently grasped Rodimus' spike, who shivered at the contact. He stroked up the length, his huge hand engulfing nearly the entirety of it, which contradicted his words. "You are more than plenty, Rodimus."

His low self-esteem wanted him to argue, but the rhythmic stroke of Megatron's hand stole his attention. Pre-fluid beaded at its tip and Megatron spread it around with his thumb. His optics fluttered shut as he gave himself over to the feeling. He even went so far as to lift his hips to meet his hand.

"I want a night to ravish you," Megatron murmured. "I want to watch you come undone by my

hand. Not tonight,” he added. “Once you’ve healed.”

The scenario played out in Rodimus’ processor and he shivered at the idea. His valve cover opened of its own accord and a he froze up.

“Sorry, I just...” He hid behind his hands.

Kisses to the backs of his hands had him peeking back out. As soon as he did, he got a real kiss. He opened his optics almost immediately when he heard the same sound of covers sliding away.

Megatron touched their forehelms together. “What can I do to ease your anxiety?”

Rodimus minutely shrugged and shrank in on himself.

“I can turn the lights back off,” Megatron suggested. “Your comfort is more important to me.”

“I mean... that might help, but...”

He gave Rodimus a gentle look. “I really do feel like I’m pushing you.”

“No, it’s—!” Rodimus sighed. “I’m not, um, really that experienced,” he admitted meekly while avoiding optic contact. “I mean, I’ve fragged before but it was usually with my valve and it’s kinda been a while and... I just don’t want you to lose interest in me.”

“I’ve spent *months* trying to lose interest in you.” He smiled. “I don’t think this could change anything. I also don’t believe that you can have a bad frag if you’re with the right bot. I would enjoy even the clumsiest, most awkward interfacing with you, so long as it’s with *you*. My lust is a lust that can only be satisfied by your touch.”

Rodimus snort-laughed. “Shut up,” he said affectionately.

Megatron smiled and kissed his forehead. “But it helped?”

“... You really mean that?”

“I do. I love everything about you. This is all for you. Well... it is for you, but I will enjoy myself as long as you are.”

They looked into each other’s optics. Blue, a worried storm coming to its end. Red, reassuring and gentle. Optic covers shut, and when they reopened, the clouds started to clear and the blue shone a little brighter than before. Not quite a clear day, but close.

“Okay, well, uh, I guess you should lie down then? Or not.”

“Whatever you’d like.”

Rodimus swallowed.

“Really, my Sun. Nothing will disappoint me and I have no expectations.”

Megatron stroked Rodimus’ cheek and he closed his optics and focused on that tender touch. When he opened his optics, Megatron was already halfway to lying down, but even with the fullness of his spark and the lust sparking arousal in his frame, anxiety still fizzled his field.

Rodimus swallowed as he positioned himself between Megatron’s thighs. His optics followed his frame from his chest to his bared valve glowing a gentle red. A bit of envy cropped up over how

pretty it was, but then he was the one who got to enjoy it.

“Rodimus.”

“Huh?” He quickly looked up to meet Megatron’s gaze. Flinching slightly when Megatron’s fingers brushed his face, he then welcomed the touch and nuzzled against his hand.

Megatron smiled gently. “There is nothing you could do to spoil this night.”

Rodimus matched his smile. “You’re just so beautiful,” he murmured. “And I’m so happy that I’m here with you.”

After a gentle tug from Megatron, Rodimus leaned in to kiss him. They kissed deeply and through it came all of their emotions crashing through their fields. *Love you, need you, want you.*

Following this, Megatron left another kiss on his cheek, just shy of his mouth. He murmured, “I love you,” so quietly that Rodimus barely heard it, but he felt it through the brush of his lips.

“I love you, too,” Rodimus whispered back. Sitting back on his pedes, one hand on his spike to guide it, he asked, “You ready?”

Megatron nodded.

Rodimus rested one hand on Megatron’s chest to steady himself and ran his spike through the wet folds. When Megatron gasped quietly, it drew his gaze, and he found him with optics closed. He kept watching as he slowly pushed in and saw the pleasure creep in to all of his features until he reached the hilt. He just stared at him for a little while until his optics opened a touch and then he kissed him again. He opened his own a moment later, just to see his face again.

Megatron moaned gently when Rodimus started to move and let himself lie back on the berth. Rodimus kissed at his neck in lieu of feeling all the sounds he made against his lips. Not to mention that it made him a little louder. And the more he moaned, the less Rodimus worried.

“You’re so beautiful,” Rodimus repeated. “I can’t get enough of you.”

“And look at you,” Megatron said, his voice breathy. “You’re a vision.”

Rodimus beamed. He lowered himself onto Megatron, chest-to-chest, buried in his neck and inhaling his scent. He slowly fragged him, finding his lover’s hands in the sheets to intertwine their fingers and grip tight so they could give themselves over to the feeling.

His own name found Rodimus’ audial. Deep and lustful. He revved his engines and thrust a little harder, and his name took on a gravelly tone.

Rodimus lifted his helm and found Megatron looking at him. He started to close his optics and Megatron did the same, and just as their lips met, Megatron bit his lower lip, and he gasped quietly. He moved his hips faster until he had to release him to moan.

Rocking into him, gently, Rodimus watched him at close quarters. Steam billowed from his vents. Condensation dripped languidly down his chassis and he followed that movement with his hands. He wanted to touch every inch of his frame, but Primus only gave him two hands and not nearly enough time.

Watching Megatron pant and arch beneath him filled him with lust and love and he could do nothing but stare at him with adoration. And then Megatron opened his optics. That same vulnerability from

before returned. This time, he welcomed it. He was bathed in a soft red glow and he saw the same nervousness, the same uncertainty, but also the same adoring *wonder*. To be here, in each others arms. *Finally*.

He paused for just a moment. Megatron still moved. Still pressed up against him, taking just a little more as he panted. But Rodimus took this moment. He softened his gaze and pressed a kiss to open lips. Following that, one to his chin and then to his neck. A soft kiss. And *Primus* if he didn't adore how every little touch had Megatron reacting. Moaning, gasping, *clawing*. Fingertips pressed firm into his plating and then slid into gaps that had Rodimus returning similar gasps. Every moment topped the last.

"I love you," Rodimus whispered against Megatron's chest. He said it again through each kiss he left there. A part of him was worried when he didn't hear the same sentiment back, but he'd picked up the pace and Megatron was saying things just as beautiful.

"*More*," he said, deep and gravelly. "*Harder*."

He gave him just a little more. Just enough to satisfy the huge, shaking frame beneath him.

Rodimus spread Megatron's legs just a little further. His ventilations hitched and he groaned pleausrably as Rodimus gave him long, hard thrusts. He rested his helm on Megatron's chest, his racing spark spurring him on. He was all but pounding into him when Megatron's grip moved to his spoiler.

"*Rodimus*," he moaned his name. He'd hear that echo through his processor for weeks.

"Oh, Megatron..." He lifted himself onto his hands to see his face in ecstasy. "You're so beautiful." He cupped his cheek and caught a glimmer of red. Megatron lifted his hand, no doubt intending to do the same, but it shook as it brushed his jaw and then fell back to the berth. He searched it out with his own, intertwining their fingers once more. Megatron's grip was lax, but there.

Megatron's ragged ventilations misted over his lips as he dipped down to kiss him once more. He shook and moaned and was intoxicatingly out of control. For Megatron to show this self to him... he was honoured. Honoured, and so, so in love.

"Close?" Rodimus guessed, feeling Megatron's calipers flutter and clamp down, drawing him deeper into the wet heat.

In lieu of answering, Megatron increased the grip on his hand and arched further off of the berth.

"Me too," Rodimus whispered against his lips before diving back in for another kiss. By now it was hardly a kiss. They just kept their mouths together, moaning in tandem and grinding against each other. Incoherent and sloppy, and Rodimus wouldn't have it any other way.

Reaching the crest, Rodimus tried to hold himself there and prolong this wonderful moment. But as soon as Megatron cried out in overload, his valve contracted and Rodimus was thrown into his own, burrowing into Megatron's neck.

Coming down slowly, Rodimus kissed every bit of Megatron's plating he could reach. Megatron returned the gesture through the hands running down his back. They kept kissing and caressing and kept the fizzle of overload alive, tingling out into their limbs.

Rodimus' spark burned and ached in the most wonderful way. Spent, it still yearned to give more love. Give him his *all*.

Panting hard, Rodimus cracked open optics becoming heavy with fatigue, and found Megatron below him with bliss and love in his. He smiled tiredly up at him, and a burst of happiness made his spark swell even more. He gave him a sappy smile in return and lowered his forehelm to Megatron's.

"Was that special enough?" Megatron asked.

Rodimus kissed him gently and then rested his helm on Megatron's shoulder. "If I get to fall asleep right now, then yes."

Megatron chuckled. He wrapped his arms around Rodimus and settled down more comfortably. "I think that can be arranged."

"Mm..." Rodimus snuggled closer. "I think I like this better."

"Oh? Better than what?"

"Better than you pretending you don't want to cuddle me to sleep." Rodimus smirked against him.

Megatron hummed against the top of his helm and then kissed it. "I'm sorry I put you through all of that. I'm here now."

Rodimus shrugged. "I still got to cuddle with you. And now I can whenever I want to."

"Yes." Megatron stroked his spoiler, smiling as it twitched. "You can."

"*Great*, so you'll be here tomorrow?"

"Rodimus, I will be here every night. As long as you will have me."

Rodimus' spoiler fluttered. Smiling as he settled down with Megatron's hands resting on his back, he whispered, "Always."

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